

FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM!

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UN PEACEKILLERS

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NEW WHITE WARLORDS

Colonialism— back with a vengeance

No phrase has been devalued more quickly than that of 'humanitarian assistance', the banner under which the UN undertook intervention in Somalia. The seventy Somali civilians ripped apart in the UN (ie US) helicopter gunship attack on General Aideed's compound on 12 July are mute witnesses to humanitarianism New World Order-style. This brutal event came only two weeks after US President Clinton unleashed a deadly barrage of Cruise missiles into the centre of Baghdad, killing dozens of civilians, amongst them one of Iraq's leading artists. The less than wafer-thin pretext for this butchery was that an alleged plot to assassinate former President Bush (now that really would have been an act of humanitarianism) had been masterminded by Iraqi intelligence.

A new confidence and belligerence in the tone and actions of the Great Powers is crudely apparent. 'Colonialism is back and not a moment too soon' wrote Paul Johnson in the influential New York Times, adding that:

'The civilised world has a mission to go out to these desperate places and govern'. Johnson, a notorious right-winger, was not only articulating the sentiments of US and imperialist triumphalism, but also the views of a section of the left intelligentsia. Writing in the *New Statesman* in January, Martin Shaw said: 'Opposition to Western military intervention in the Third World... is now downright wrong.' Not surprisingly he has preserved a discreet silence in the face of recent events in Somalia.

'UN Peacekillers'

Since the UN entered Somalia on 9 December 1992, the Somali people have learned to hate what is essentially a military occupation by the USA. 26,000 UN troops now wage war on the Somali people. The Aid Agencies, whose blocked relief efforts provided the excuse for the intervention, now complain that their work has been made impossible and is entirely secondary to 'military objectives'. Prime amongst these objectives is the capture of General Aideed on whose head the UN has placed a \$25,000 reward, 'Dead or Alive'. On 12 June Aideed's headquarters were bombed and when the populace poured into the streets to protest, 20 men, women and children were gunned down as UN troops fired on the unarmed demonstrators. This was the first step in a plan which included house-to-house searches, mass arrests and other ground operations such as the 17 June armed attack on Digfer hospital. By 14 July at least 150 Somali civilians had been killed.

Although sheltering under the UN 'peacekeeping' umbrella, this is effectively a US operation to secure strategic control over Somalia. As another right-wing commentator Conor Cruise

O'Brien said: 'The subordination of the UN to US domestic policies is not a remote danger. In some areas it is already an established fact.' The UN forces are led by a retired US Admiral, Jonathon Howe. UN officials are rarely even briefed before US troops undertake operations like the bombing of Mogadishu. The pretence that this is a UN operation disappears altogether at the daily press briefings at which the only telephone hotline is one to the Pentagon. The 'peacekeepers' have claimed that women and children are being used as

understand the character of the intervention but also its purpose.

Colonial conquest

Most press commentators, unable to understand US motives in Somalia, have resorted to either 'humanitarianism' or the need for Clinton to boost his image as a 'strong leader'. Why can they not see the explanation which stares them in the face? The US is intent on extending its influence throughout Africa at the expense of the other major imperialist powers. In Somalia it intends to impose a puppet regime or a UN protectorate. Somalia, with a commanding position over sea routes through the Gulf, East and Southern Africa and the Indian Ocean has long been prized by the US which now has its eyes set on further incursions into the Horn of Africa. US Secretary of State Warren Christopher has stated: 'Now we need to try to apply these lessons of preventive diplomacy to Sudan.' Sudan's value to imperialism is evident. It controls the headwaters of the Nile and has im-

mense oilfields coveted by Chevron and other US oil companies.

No local opposition will be allowed to stand in the way of these ambitions. The US is today targeting General Aideed because he has not proved to be entirely pliant, just as with Saddam Hussein. Aideed is the most powerful of Somalia's ruling class factions and has resisted total subordination to US designs. He has succeeded in manipulating popular hostility to imperialism to bolster his previously flagging power. The US is therefore intent on destroying him.

Dividing the spoils

Whilst the US is the world's dominant power, other imperialist nations will not sit back and accept its monopoly of colonial acquisition. Italy, the previous colonial power in Somalia, has registered its opposition to US domination of the intervention there and threatened to pull its troops out. Germany, having changed its Constitution to allow military operations abroad and seeking a seat on the UN Security Council, is strengthening its contingent in Somalia. The German population is having to be rapidly re-educated to support what the Foreign Minister called 'healthy patriotism' which will mean 'using power, not opting out.' Thus the German state, apparently unable to muster enough policemen to guard immigrant hostels under fascist assault, readily finds the resources for war against black people abroad.

Imperialism cannot be civilised or made humanitarian. A new age of militarism, racist conquest and war is under way. If we do not stand against it now humanity will pay a terrible price. If we do not destroy imperialism, it will destroy us.

'... but the Somali people know otherwise. Their frequent demonstrations echo to the slogans: 'Down with US imperialism', 'UN Peacekillers' and 'New White Warlords'. They not only understand the character of the intervention, but also its purpose.'



News

Pensioners fight back

RENE WALLER

In the eyes of our rulers pensioners are living too long. They are threatening to means-test our basic pension, make the retirement age 65 for both men and women, put VAT on both gas and electricity and so increase our basic bills, not to mention deregulating the buses, posing another threat to our travel permits and making councils responsible for the provision of community care but not providing the funds to provide that care. That is just to mention a few of the measures whose real aim is to reduce the quality of life for all pensioners and threaten the very existence of the poorest.

We are not taking it lying down, I am glad to say, and on 29 June 10,000 of us went up to Westminster to lobby parliament. First we filled the two Westminster Central Halls and overflowed onto the streets. Then some of us went to the arranged meeting,

with our MPs. I went with the 60-strong Lewisham Group and we met our MPs who first complained that we were late. Well, that was not our fault - getting into the House of Commons these days means first finding your way through the security net! I for one was not very impressed. Yes, maybe they'll raise a question or two if it can be done without too much effort but some of us raised the need for extra-parliamentary activity to make a breakthrough and get attention to these urgent matters. I didn't get the impression that much would be done by those claiming to represent us.

How far there will actually be any concrete result is always difficult to say, but at least we made our desire for action very clear, and our group at any rate was well organised, many members having come along prepared to raise specific points so that a large number of pensioners took an active part and will certainly want results.

I must say though, that for me

and my friends the real thrill was to come out to find not only the central lobby but the corridors and small rooms all full of vociferous pensioners all demanding attention.

Even when we eventually got through the crowd and emerged into the sunshine it was to see queues stretching back towards Big Ben all waiting to lobby in their turn and meanwhile busy exchanging views and opinions with those from other areas.

It was a great effort by the over-60s; what about other sections of the population getting organised? I'm often asked when petitioning with my pensioners group in Lewisham market: 'Why is all this work being left to you oldies? Things like VAT on domestic fuel and hospital closures for example affect everyone, and child benefit like pensions, is under threat.'

I'm all for unity - an attack on one is an injury to all - since many groups are threatened many groups should organise to fight back. How about it?



Pensioners on the march

TUC fails to fight to save pits

BOB SHEPHERD

In October 1992 Heseltine announced his plans to close 31 pits. Hundreds of thousands of people showed their opposition to this attack on the miners and their communities, supporting the two massive demonstrations in London called by the NUM and TUC. Already, though, the danger to the miners' fight was clear: the TUC's priority was not the fight to defend jobs and pits but rather the attempt alongside the Labour Party to build a cross-class anti-Tory alliance. This was reflected in a platform consisting of Paddy Ashdown, businessmen, Labour MPs and assorted dignitaries. As we said at the time, 'such a strategy spells disaster for the miners' (FRFI 110).

From 200,000 on its demonstration in October, this strategy has ended in the TUC's pathetic 'vigil for the miners' outside parliament on 4 July with only a handful of people attending. The effectiveness of the TUC's 'campaign' was summed up by Norman Willis when he said, 'The prospect is that over the next 18 months 38 pits will close, not 31'. The TUC's 'cam-

paign' has surely been the kiss of death for the miners.

On the ground in local miners' support groups a similar experience occurred. Set up by Labour Party branches and trade union bodies, such groups after being formed either didn't meet again, or were so secretive that no one could find out where they met. In the North-West some of these groups refused to work with the North-West Miners Support Group Network until after the only pit in Lancashire was formally closed.

Yet the potential for a serious challenge to the closures was evident in the mining communities - particularly in the activities of Women Against Pit Closures, with their camps at colliery gates, local rallies and demonstrations, and direct action including occupying threatened pits and chaining themselves to railings at Downing Street. Such activities could have given leadership to the thousands who showed their opposition to the Tory's plans back in October. But the TUC and Labour Party were determined that no such lead would be given. Damned by the silence and inactivity of the labour movement, the mining communities were isolated and marginalised, as they were during the

Strike. Now as then, they could not win alone.

Compare the betrayal of the organisations who purport to represent the working class with the determination of the guardians of capital to protect their class. Evidence has been handed to Labour MPs that Roger Windsor, NUM chief executive during the 1984-5 Strike and the man responsible for the allegation that Scargill used strike funds to pay his mortgage was actually a spy working for MI5. According to the MPs he was 'sent in to the NUM to destabilise and sabotage the union at its most critical juncture'. He nearly succeeded: although the allegation about Scargill's mortgage was later found by the Lightman enquiry to be 'entirely untrue', defending Scargill in the legal actions arising from Windsor's activities cost the union £700,000.

Small wonder that Arthur Scargill has recently talked of the need to conceive a new party. Only a new party, building on the example of the Women Against Pit Closures, can carry forward the lessons of the miners' struggles over the last 100 years - over the last 100 years and ensure that next time, working class communities do not fight alone.

Armed police off our streets

SARAH BOND

In an unprecedented attempt to thwart the IRA's highly successful operations in London, armed roadblocks have been introduced across the square mile of the City. Still reeling from April's blast which caused millions of pounds worth of damage, and faced with a massive 300% increase in insurance costs since the first bombing in April 1992, City firms are now 'entitled to regard security as the number one priority of the City authorities'. So Michael Cassidy, policy chairman of the City Corporation, justifies the scheme which is being dubbed in the media 'Fortress London'.

Under the scheme, 18 streets have been blocked off, so that entry to the City is restricted to eight roads, each with a 24 hour 'scanning point' manned by armed police. Vehicles passing through these scanning points are stopped and searched at random. The so-called 'ring of steel' is meant to run for a six month trial period but already the City authorities are talking about making it permanent, something which will require Parliament's agreement. There is also talk of increasing police powers under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE), as currently the police do not actually have the legal powers to use road blocks in this fashion.

The violence which lies at the heart of the state, evident in the occupied six counties of Ireland for the last twenty years, is now on display here on mainland Britain. Armed police road blocks are not confined to the City. Blackfriars Bridge, for exam-

ple, is a site for armed police. Yet there has been barely a murmur of protest. What opposition there has been has centred on concern not about guns and increased police powers but about 'propaganda victories' for the IRA.

The British ruling class knows it cannot defeat the Republican movement by these means: far more extensive measures in Belfast city centre have failed. But the fact remains that it has to be seen to do something about the IRA's activities in the City. The City plays a crucial role in the ailing British economy: it contributed £17 billion last year. It is able to make such a contribution because of its historical role as the world centre of finance capital. In 1992 it held 30% of the world's foreign market business, with 526 foreign banks and 160 overseas securities firms. But increasingly Tokyo and Frankfurt threaten London's dominance. The risk of repeated bombings can only accelerate the City's decline. The IRA, fully aware of this, actually wrote in July to all non-British firms explaining the history of the conflict and warning them that attacks will continue as long as Britain remains in Ireland.

The armed roadblocks are an attack on democratic rights and must be opposed, along with any extension of police powers. This is in the interests both of Irish freedom and of the movement here in Britain: for if the British state can mobilise armed police with impunity in response to threats from the nationalist movement in Ireland, imagine the measures it will use against a threat from a section of its own population here in Britain. ■

PTA injustice

SARAH BOND

The case of John Matthews, excluded from Britain under the PTA minutes after being acquitted of a bomb charge, has highlighted the sweeping powers used against Irish people in Britain.

Matthews, who has no connection with nationalist organisations, was arrested in May after a taxi driver was ordered to drive a bomb to Downing Street, the evening after the Bishopsgate bombing. He was held for seven days under the PTA and claims the police 'were going to try and pin the Bishopsgate bomb on me'. He says, 'At the end of those seven days' arrest I would have signed anything they put in front of me just to get out of that cell'.

At the court case, the prosecution offered no evidence and Matthews was freed. But he was immediately rearrested and held at Paddington Green station, after being told he was 'a person whose presence in the UK is undesirable for the health of the state'. He was then put on a flight to the north of Ireland - which apparently for these purposes is not regarded as part of the 'UK'.

Matthews' exclusion caused a flurry of publicity. Previous orders against other Irish people acquitted of political charges - the Winchester Three, Dessie Ellis, Danny McBrearty - received no comment. The reason this time is that Tory maverick Peter Bottomley picked up on the case, describing Matthews as 'a fine man without a stain on his character' and concluding that 'he deserves an apology'. All that was forthcoming from Home Secretary Michael Howard, however, was a statement that Matthews was involved in terrorism. This amounts to a death sentence in the north of Ireland - indeed Matthews arrived in Ireland to a death threat from a Loyalist group who are 'looking forward to making your acquaintance'.

Matthews can 'appeal' against the three-year exclusion order within 14 days but he will not be told of the grounds for exclusion or the evidence against him. 198 orders were made between 1980 and 1990, 97 of which remained in force at the end of the decade. That the British state is able to get away with such acts of tyranny against Irish people shames the progressive movement here in Britain. ■

IRELAND in briefs

Sectarian state

Data from the recent census confirm the discrimination faced by Catholics in the occupied six counties of Ireland. Catholic men are 2.2 times more likely than Protestant men to be unemployed: for women the figure is 1.8. 28.4% of Catholic economically active men are unemployed, compared to 12.7% of Protestants. Of the 50 local government wards with the highest unemployment rates, 45 are exclusively or mainly Catholic. The worst is Brandywell in Derry, which has 60% male unemployment, and is 99% Catholic. By contrast, the 80 wards with the lowest unemployment are exclusively or mainly Protestant.

A confidential government report states that 'on all the major social and economic indicators Catholics are worse off than Protestants'. It goes on, 'More Catholics than Protestants leave school lacking any qualifications. There is a greater provision of grammar school places for Protestant than Catholic children. Significantly more Catholics than Protestants live in public sector housing and experience overcrowding. Catholic households have a lower income than Protestant households. Almost double the proportion of Catholic households are dependent on social security. Catholics suffer from higher levels of ill-health.'

Sarah Bond

Gerry Adams' home attacked

Sinn Féin President Gerry Adams' family narrowly escaped death when their family home came under grenade attack on Tuesday 8 June by a loyalist death squad. The murder squad had apparently gone unnoticed by the RUC, British army barracks and surveillance equipment close by. The grenade used was one of a consignment from South Africa which had entered Ireland via British intelligence agent Brian Nelson!

Murder attempt

Gary Heagney was lucky to escape with his life; on Thursday 17 June he was followed by a patrol of 3 RUC cars as he drove home. He was stopped, forced from his car and led down a lane where he was searched. Simultaneously, two unidentified men drove up in a Fiat car. One got into the back of Heagney's car while the other tried to force Heagney back into his driver's seat. When Heagney resisted, the RUC officers intervened and spreadeagled him across the bonnet of the car. Only the timely intervention by local residents and Gary's father prevented another nationalist death. The RUC patrol and the Fiat rapidly disappeared.

News! News! News!

On 24 June a US court shifted the burden of proof in the extradition hearing against James Smyth, one of the 37 H-Block escapees, onto the British government. The judge criticised the government for failing to supply documents to allow James a fair hearing.

Parcel bombs

Parcel bombs are being posted in loyalist East Belfast. On 15 June one such device addressed to a Catholic exploded in the Post Office in Belfast when it fell 15 feet from a conveyor belt. Luckily no one was injured. The explosion led to the discovery of 5 similar devices all addressed to people living in nationalist areas.

Pam Robinson

Rahman family - here to stay

RAHMAN FAMILY DEFENCE CAMPAIGN

Mr and Mrs Rahman and their two daughters Shabana and Malka are from Djibouti. They are now settled in Bolton. Mrs Rosmina Rahman has cancer and initially came to this country for treatment. Shabana has multiple handicaps and attends a special school in Bolton.

The Home Office want to deport the family: this is in spite of numerous medical and educational reports. One report states 'There is not treatment or follow-up available in Djibouti and we would like Mrs Rahman to remain here under careful medical supervision'. For Shabana another report says: 'it would be very detrimental for her to return to where her basic educational needs cannot be met.'

The Rahman Family Defence Campaign asks for support not on the basis of pity, but solidarity against racist immigration laws, and for the right of all black people to enter and remain in the UK.

Since the campaign started

last autumn we have organised a national demonstration in Bolton in April - the biggest the town had seen for years, with support from trade unions and anti-racist groups and the local black community. 2,000 campaigners took over the Town Square for an event that is still talked about.

The Defence Campaign has also made links with other groups who attended the April demonstration - the Mantra Chopra Campaign from Bradford and the West Midlands Anti-Deportation Campaign.

Building a working alliance of such campaigns is a vital part in taking forward the struggle against British state racism and ensuring the Rahman family are 'here to stay'.

The next major date is a national Festival against Immigration Controls with stalls and entertainment around an exhibition of black people's struggle. It's on 12 September at Sunning Hill School in Bolton.

For more information contact the Rahman Family Defence Campaign c/o The Socialist Club, 16 Wood Street, Bolton BL1 1DY. ■

Power, corruption and lies

CAT WIENER

A corrupt and decaying capitalist class is not the sole preserve of Britain; it is simply a shame that our MPs do not follow the recent example of their French and Italian counterparts when caught with their hands in the till, and do the decent thing by ridding the world of a few more hypocritical parasites.

For while the Tory Party clothes itself in the language of 'moral values' and 'the fight against crime' when it is question of impoverishing and locking up the working class, quite different rules apply when it comes to looking after their own sordid interests. What price 'bankrupt' millionaire Asil Nadir's apparently painless exit to Cyprus (the little matter of his lack of a passport did not seem to trouble the authorities) when wanted on serious fraud charges over the collapse of his company Polly Peck? A cool £440,000 into Tory Party coffers, a few free holidays in Cyprus for MPs, and frequent visits to Downing Street during Thatcher's reign to help with fundraising ventures. Similarly 80-year-old UK Nissan boss Octav Botnar, now safe in Switzerland, having jumped bail after involvement in what is thought to be the biggest ever tax fraud - £97m (for which his deputy is now doing time) is thought to have given the Tories some £1m. Lord McAlpine, Tory fundraising supremo, was less coy than Major about these allegations, describing Botnar as an 'incredibly generous philanthropist' who saved Britain a good deal of money by fleeing to avoid prosecution.

This murky little episode has prompted further speculation about where the Tories get their money - Heseltine's alleged

meeting with members of the Saudi Arabian royal family prior to the 1991 election, Greek and Hong Kong tycoons, the Sultan of Brunei... However, demands that the Tories reveal their sources are futile, since much of their money is passed via a front organisation, British United Industrialists. For a small fee, plus VAT, BUI passes on donations from those too sensitive about being seen to contribute to Tory Party funds.

Spare a thought for those impoverished Names down to their last Merc as Lloyds calls in debts. 47 Tory MPs, including Employment Minister David Hunt and Scottish Secretary Ian Lang ought to face bankruptcy, except that the Lloyds Hardship Committee is 'designed to protect members' homes and preserve a level of income sufficient to meet the reasonable domestic needs of their families'. Pass the champagne...

Lack of space prevents any chronicling of the dodgy dealings of John Gummer, the ex-Chancellor, the ex-Heritage Minister... but a few words about some real muck and some real brass. Earlier this year, then Environment Secretary Michael Howard awarded an air pollution monitoring contract to Rendel Science and Environment. This is a subsidiary of that well-known friend of the environment Tarmac, who are even now drilling a six-lane motorway through Twyford Down. As members of the British Road Federation and constructors of most of Britain's roads, they form a powerful part of the road lobby. Cars are responsible for most of the carbon monoxide and nitrogen oxide and black smoke that pollutes the air we breathe. First you poison the atmosphere, then you get paid for investigating the problem. The perfect scam. ■

ANTI-RACISM in briefs

Rita Porter

Rita Porter, a black mother of two small children, was brutally assaulted and arrested on 18 June in Kentish Town High Street, North London, after the LEB called police to evict her from their premises. She had gone to the showroom to arrange the connection of the electricity supply in her new home and been told that unless she paid a further £27 on top of the connection charge she had already paid, the work would not be done for three days. She said she did not have another £27, that her three-month old baby had a bad chest, she herself suffered from rheumatoid arthritis and she was not leaving until the LEB agreed to connect her that day. The staff then closed the showroom and called the police. Eight police officers arrested her, separating her violently from her two small children. Eyewitnesses reported that 'The police were pulling the baby off her, dragging the baby out of her arms. It was being flung around like a rugby ball. Then they threw her to the floor and were all over her forcing her arms up her back to handcuff her.' As is frequently the case when the police assault members of the public, Rita was subsequently charged with assaulting them.



Rita Porter

On 10 July about 50 people demonstrated outside Kentish Town Police Station and later marched down to the LEB office. A further protest was planned for the day of Rita's court appearance but the night before her charges were mysteriously dropped! She is now suing for compensation.

The Drummond Street 4

Four Asian men who defended their community against a racist attack by a gang of five white men, were acquitted of charges of violent disorder on 15 June.

On 26 April 1992 the white men drove from West London to Drummond Street, a predominantly Asian area near to Euston station. They were armed with knuckle-dusters and hammers; they hurled abuse at Asian residents, chased two Asian youths and threatened to kill a shopkeeper. The police were called but failed to come and the gang were finally apprehended by local people who were not prepared to continue being intimidated and abused.

'Protesting against the bringing of the charges, the Drummond Street Four campaign said: 'The clear message given by the police to the Asian community is: We will not protect you against racist attacks but we will not let you defend yourself either.'

Following intensive campaigning, the judge in the case took the unusual step of directing the jury to consider the high number of racial attacks against Bengalis in Euston as a relevant factor. However, the four still had to undergo a 12-day crown court hearing, before acquittal, while all five white youths had their charges dropped in a magistrates' court last November. Nicki Jameson

News

Oh, the joys of freedom

Those lucky old Russians, free from the tyranny of socialism, are now sharing the free market delights that make life in the capitalist world so... so full of choice and variety. And one increasingly popular choice is murder. Russia now has the second highest murder rate in the world, up 50% in the first half of this year to nearly 15,000, second only to Lebanon. OK, so it's not one of the more widely advertised benefits of capitalism but hey, it's freedom.

Another benefit they're learning to appreciate is the buying and selling of women. *The Independent* reports that in Mongolia 'in 70 years of Stalinist rule, audiences swallowed a strict diet of classical ballet and opera'. Now these culturally starved masses are being given state-subsidised striptease. A surge of interest in 'erotica', ie photographs of humiliated women, is reported. The strip joint managers report problems of modesty amongst the women: 'We have to soften them up to make them undress in front of patrons'. Perhaps US experts could fly in and hold workshops for them: 'Becoming a Commodity', 'The Joy of Fetishism'.

What do they want? Sympathy?

The thin blue line must have been a bit stretched on 20 July as 23,000 police took time off from their onerous duties to rally in Wembley against the Sheehy proposals. (Why didn't we storm Parliament that day?) Sheehy, head of the tobacco giant BAT, wants to apply market principles to the police force and has infuriated the police and, incidentally, their biggest supporter, the Labour Party. No wonder. It threatens to put them on ten-year contracts, give them performance related pay and make them retire at 60, instead of in their 40s. It also wants to cut the middle management, ie the Rest Home to which most police get by their 30s, exhausted by ten years of beating up black people. The Wembley riot was provoked by outside agitators... sorry, wrong event.

This month's competition is to devise a slogan for the police campaign against Sheehy, for instance 'Freedom's Baton Endangered'.

Labour strikes blow

Talking of batons, the police are currently conducting trials on the US-style 24-inch baton, having been given permission to do so by the new Home Secretary. His predecessor, Clarke, had opposed the trials and came in for heavy criticism from the Labour Party which thought 'It was tragic that 15 months had been wasted by Mr Clarke's unwillingness'. Fighting crime is a vote-winner and Labour is now more 'law and order' than the Tories.

Probably only a sharp blow on the head from the Labour-supported 24-inch baton would knock some sense into those leftists who keep telling us that Labour has some connection with socialism.

Eton, Oxford... Ford Open Prison

Home Secretary Howard, too, is 'sick and tired of rising crime and lawlessness'. Is he referring by any chance to the sharp rise in corporate fraud, up to £571 million in the first four months of 1993? The 1992 total was £671 million. Who were the fraudsters? Nearly 60% were top management; many were lawyers and accountants. The average amount defrauded was £6.3 million. A Tory politician did not comment: 'How much longer must society be preyed on by middle aged men in grey suits? When will we tackle the moral decay and criminality caused by two parent families in suburbia and nurtured on the playing fields of Eton?' ■

Parliament: a little light opera

TREVOR RAYNE

'Democracy is the way to give the people the greatest illusion of power while allowing them the smallest amount in reality'. (Walter Bagehot, *English Constitution*)

It was billed as an event of high drama, a great Parliamentary occasion, High Noon, or rather 4 o'clock in the afternoon, for Major, the Tories and the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty, with or without Social Chapter. John Major faced his countdown: 'We have drawn a line in the sand.' When the voting was over, 'good man' John who 'never lacks courage' had either 'slain the dragon' and 'immeasurably strengthened' his position, or had been 'enfeebled' and would be 'gone by Christmas'. As you wish, in drama no one ever really dies and everything that happens has been scripted. What really counts is what goes on offstage, behind the scenes.

We were not told it at the time, but Major's and Hurd's opt-out

clauses from the Maastricht Treaty (the Social Contract governing working conditions and the progress of monetary union) were bought from Germany at the cost of Britain agreeing to recognise Croatia. Some exchange; the Tory Party gets unity and impoverished, unprotected British workers for civil war in Yugoslavia.

Then there were the votes on the Thursday evening 22 July and Friday. The loyalty of Ulster was paid for with the sacrifice of British working conditions as the Tory Party made promises in order to get the Ulster Unionists to vote with it against the Social Chapter. We await the revelation of what was promised, what was paid and the cost to be borne by the nationalist people of the Six Counties.

Vote of confidence? There was nothing more certain when it came to it than, with the threat of an election and withdrawal of the Tory Whip hung over their heads, the Tory rebels would come to their senses and see who paid the bill. In the final vote all capitulated but for the MP for Torquay, Rupert Allason, who

had jumped the gun and was already bound for his Bermuda holiday home.

The speeches, the fine phrases, the two sets of front benches grinning at each other like characters from a light opera, Douglas Hurd, as reassuring as a Sunday afternoon in Dorking and the Baroness, 'in another place', strutting and flouncing like a camp idol for her fans, are the ornaments for a democracy where real power rests with the money changers in the Temple. They joke, and they laugh at jokes made at each other's expense, but the real price is paid by the 23 million forecast to be out of work in the EC within a year, and those to be sacked as Britain joins Ireland in having the fewest restrictions in the EC on the ability of employers to fire workers. Little wonder that *Guardian* columnist Hugo Young worries that people have lost faith in the political institutions of Britain and find the political parties' vituperations against each other all the more false when they come to resemble the same clueless and useless frauds. ■

Korea: US threats

TREVOR RAYNE

As part of its attempt to destroy the remaining socialist states and impose a New World Order, the USA is maintaining relentless pressure on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea - North Korea. For over a year the US government, echoed by South Korea and Japan, has been demanding the right to inspect military installations in North Korea, claiming that they are really centres for developing nuclear weapons.

In April 1992 articles appeared in the US press discussing the merits of a pre-emptive strike on North Korea. These have been recycled in the British press and parallels drawn with Israel's

1981 raid on Iraq. On his July visit to South Korea's border with the North, President Clinton remarked: 'When you examine the nature of the American security commitment to Korea... it is pointless for them to try to develop nuclear weapons because if they ever use them it would be the end of their country!'

US commitment to South Korea includes approximately 40,000 US troops armed with 1,000 nuclear weapons. North Korea withdrew from the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in March. This Treaty forbids non-nuclear states from acquiring nuclear weapons and requires International Atomic Energy Authority (IAEA) inspections. The North Korean government views the IAEA as biased

and influenced by US foreign policy interests. No effort was made to investigate Israel's or South Africa's nuclear capacity. Israel is not a signatory to the Treaty, but its nuclear ability is shielded by the US state. North Korea judges that while it is targeted by nuclear weapons (which are 'uninspected'), for it to open its military bases for inspection would seriously diminish its defence capability. The IAEA is provided with CIA spy satellite photographs as evidence of which bases to inspect.

In July North Korea agreed to resume talks with the IAEA, but has thus far refused to concede inspections. The US and Japan have threatened economic sanctions and a UN Security Council sanction if the sites are not opened up for inspection. ■



Fascist attacks in Germany

ANDREA GLAS

On 5 June, in yet another fascist attack, a popular Turkish restaurant in Konstanz, Germany, was destroyed by fire. Fortunately the

people living above the restaurant were not at home. The town's officials refuse to take fascist violence seriously and their main concern was to keep the attack secret and to keep anti-fascist protesters away.

Nevertheless, 2,000 anti-fascists gathered in protest and 400 of them blocked a bridge for 3 hours. The response of the local press was to brand the anti-fascists as 'criminal'.

There had been many previous fascist attacks in the Konstanz district including attacks on refugees, a refugee hostel, Jewish cemeteries, a memorial and left-wing and punk individuals. After the vicious onslaught on immigrants in Rostock, the fascists were allowed to rally in Konstanz, heavily protected by the police.

A petition with 1,600 signatures was presented to the Konstanz Council calling for the banning of fascist, racist, sexist and militaristic propaganda. The Council's response was to condemn fascist propaganda and left-wing, anti-fascist 'violence'. The bourgeois and reactionary elements in the Council regard anti-fascists, not fascists, as the enemy.

Konstanz, July 1993



Violence rises as election date set

CAT WIENER

On 2 June, the majority of participants in South Africa's multi-party negotiating forum agreed 27 April 1994 as a date for the first multi-racial and 'democratic' elections. Within a week, hundreds more people had been killed in the continuing violence, with more than 67 people hacked, burned or shot to death in the East Rand townships of Kathe-long, and Thokoza and renewed fighting in Natal. These figures give the lie to the view that in the current political conditions that prevail in South Africa, the elections can have anything to do with democracy.

The ANC needed a date set to persuade their increasingly disenchanted followers that the negotiations are getting somewhere. To achieve this, the ANC has agreed that an interim constitution, binding on any future elected body, can be agreed by the (unelected) negotiating forum.

The road to 'free and fair elections' is threatened by the regime's continuing strategy of terror and destabilisation, with massacres and killings a daily occurrence. A Goldstone report makes clear the collusion of the security forces in training the Inkatha and Black Cat vigilante groups the government continues to allow right-wing forces to operate with impunity. On 25 June, thousands of far-right demonstrators smashed down the doors of the World Trade Centre in Johannesburg and occupied the building for hours, hurling racist abuse at black delegates, graffiti-ing the walls and assaulting women delegates. The police stood around joking with the demonstrators, who were persuaded to leave on the promise that there would be no arrests. When asked to take action after the event, they claimed that they had been given 'false names and addresses' and could do nothing.

Contrast this to the regime's attack on the legitimate organisations of the oppressed. At dawn on 25 May, security forces raided PAC offices and the homes of hundreds of PAC members across the country. 73 arrests were made, involving 60 per cent of the PAC leadership. PAC General Secretary Benny Alexander was arrested, but escaped; President Clarence Makwethu and his deputy, Johnson Mlambo, were not at home. The police also confiscated computers and files from PAC offices. During dem-

onstrations against the attack, held by the PAC Youth League, 45 people, including children, were brutally arrested. Although the majority arrested in the raids were released without charge after the PAC threatened to pull out of the negotiations, Enoch Zulu, Administrative Officer, has been charged with a 1976 murder of which he was acquitted at the time. As President Makwethu stated, the attack was 'confirmation that apartheid is very much alive' - a point confirmed by the regime's recent lifting of the moratorium on hanging.

The PAC made a clear and unambiguous statement on the question of armed struggle stating that it would only agree a mutual cessation of hostilities with the regime. That is, as long as the regime persists in its attacks on black majority and their organisations, they have the right to defend themselves. The PAC is demanding that any Transitional Authority set up to oversee the run-up to elections must have full executive and legislative powers over the security forces, as well as the budget, state-controlled media and the elections themselves. If power remains in the hands of the regime then there can be no question of fair elections.

The PAC is also campaigning for immediate voter registration, to ensure that the millions of dispossessed have a chance to vote. For it is they - the black youth who defied Mandela and chanted 'Kill a Boer, kill a farmer!' at Sebokeng; the township dwellers who are defending themselves against vigilante and police attacks; the forgotten of the squatter camps and shanty towns - who can make a difference to the future of South Africa. In an interview with the *Weekly Journal* Winnie Mandela, who has been suspended from the ANC Women's League for her outspokenness but who maintains a firm link with the youth, said 'We need to go back to the country and get a mandate from the people... so that we do not have the fears we have today: that the elite of the oppressed and the elite of the oppressors are talking about us, about our interests which they don't know.' As the ANC leadership makes it clear that it has thrown in its lot with the National Party, only a coalition of those who are concerned with the interests of the oppressed can offer a way forward for the majority. Winnie Mandela warned: 'The masses will find out if they have been sold a dummy - and this land will never know peace.' ■

After weeks of disagreement, the African National Congress (ANC) and the National Party were able to announce South Africa's first 'non-racial' election date - 27 April 1994. The date, arrived at by 'sufficient consensus', emerged in time to meet the ANC's deadline set in response to Chris Hani's murder, and perhaps more importantly, in time to allow President de Klerk and Nelson Mandela to share the Philadelphia Liberty Medal, presented by US President Clinton on 4 July, in honour of their services to peace and democracy. Imperialism is keen to ensure that the 'New South Africa' has the appearance of democracy. Big business is ready to smoothe any differences with appropriate rewards for the 'main players', and media placemen are happy to ice the cake by pairing up the former antagonists in 'warm and genuine friendship': the 'disarming' Ralph Meyer and 'charismatic' Cyril Ramaphosa (Joint Men of the Year); the 'unbitter' Mandela and 'moderate' de Klerk (Architects of Democracy). This apparent outbreak of reasonableness is only soured a little by the extremes of left and right - the ANC and the National Party now firmly occupy the centre ground.

The deodorised image does not bear much relation to reality for more than the elite; South Africa stinks of death, poverty and dirty dealing. The black majority does not feature: the harsh statistics of 10,000 dead in three and a half years since Mandela's release, 50 per cent black unemployment, 7 million living in squatter camps, 10 million black school-children with little chance of education, do not fit happily with the democratic miracle. Yet while the interests of the increasingly impoverished black working class and dispossessed peasantry do not drive the negotiating process, their spectre sits at the table; 'weighing like a nightmare on the brains of the living'. The 'main players' are increasingly alienated from their grass roots; both the ANC and the National Party have seen their support diminish. The economy is in tatters and the regime limps from one policing outrage to the next, aided only by the ANC's unflinching commitment to the negotiating process. The race is on to achieve a negotiated deal before the bubble bursts.

Imperialist ambitions

Since the mid-1980s the western imperialist nations have recognised the limitations of apartheid both economically and politically. Apartheid became a fetter on some sorts of economic development in South Africa, creating as it did quantities of cheap, unskilled, unstable, migrant labour unsuited to the needs of the modern industries which have been the hallmark of Japan's development, or to technical advancement in already-established labour-intensive industries. Pass laws, the poorest education and health provision and extreme poverty could not create the quality of labour required. The political disadvantages were overwhelming: increasingly militant opposition within South Africa from the growing working class movement challenged the stability necessary for easy super-profits. Growing opprobrium from the barbarity of apartheid, in particular from the black movement in the USA, ensured that the imperialist nations had to withdraw support. Between 1984 and 1991 214 US firms, two-thirds of the total investing in South Africa, withdrew. The stock of US direct investment fell from \$2.6 billion at the start of the 1980s to \$700 million at the end of the decade. Another 190 firms, most of them British, left over the same period.

The imperialists, however, did not withdraw for moral reasons. They were no more outraged by the treatment of the majority than they had been in the previous 40 years. What frightened them most was the possi-

SOUTH AFRICA

Perspectives for defeat

The birth of a 'New South Africa' has been proclaimed again by the imperialists and their media hacks. CAROL BRICKLEY examines the driving forces behind the alliance between the African National Congress and the National Party.

bility that the excesses of apartheid would lead to a revolution in South Africa. All their efforts since then have been directed at creating a new South Africa which will offer stability for renewed exploitation not only of South Africa itself, but of the whole Southern African region. Their strategy was necessarily two-fold: the



Nelson Mandela

amelioration of the worst aspects of apartheid (good old-fashioned racism will do), and if democracy has to be an ingredient to achieve stability, then the affiliation of a leading section of the liberation movement and the working class which will ensure the quiescence of the South African working class.

There is nothing new about imperialism's objectives. Time and again it has been able to buy off sections of liberation movements in emergent nations in Africa to thwart liberation. At the crudest level this has meant the creation of a small black elite to act as the local brokers of imperialism in the oppression of the population. Democracy has not been necessary. South Africa, however, has a large, politically aware working class, which is demanding the vote and will not settle for less. Here too, there are precedents. The British working class did not achieve the vote until a bourgeois Labour Party was in existence to ensure that the working class, or at least the labour aristocracy which controlled the labour movement, was wedded to bourgeois rule and to imperialism itself.

Imperialism is very close to achieving these objectives in South Africa. De Klerk is their local broker, representing the reform of the apartheid regime. He is now presented as the leader of a moderate centre party and aims to win sizeable black support at the election. This, however, will not be enough - the vast majority of black people will not vote for the National Party no matter how reformed its image. It is essential that the aspirations of the majority appear to be met in the 'new South Africa' and at the same time are not allowed to challenge imperialism.

The road to incorporation

The ANC leadership is now on the verge of powersharing with the National Party for an unstated period, at least five years. Bourgeois commentators are not wrong to point to the new found amity between the parties, or to the luxuries which have been showered on the ANC's leading negotiators. Cyril Ramaphosa, the ANC's chief negotiator, was once a leading NUM militant. He now works for Anglo-American Corporation in a different sense. At a more insidious

level, British and US universities and colleges are full of South African trade unionists on short courses financed by imperialism in one form or another, to teach them the skills of union bureaucracy, British-style. These are the symptoms of a deep-seated malaise. The ANC has in fact abandoned the central tenets of its



FW de Klerk

liberation programme in favour of piecemeal reformism. It hopes this will lead to a more equitable society, as no doubt has every Labour leadership since 1902. The evidence of the last 91 years in Britain is that they are wrong. The failure to overthrow the bourgeoisie in South Africa will entrench poverty and racism.

The writing was on the wall when Joe Slovo, erstwhile communist, offered his contribution to the discussion on the negotiated way forward, which was incorporated into the ANC's document 'Strategic Perspective' in September 1992. The document recommended the acceptance of power-sharing (albeit with some differences over what this would mean); the retention and protection of a privileged white bureaucracy; the acceptance of regionalism. Above all the newly elected Constituent Assembly would be fettered by prior agreements, ostensibly made by a broad but unelected negotiations forum, in fact agreed between the 'main players', the ANC and the National Party. This is a decisive shift away from majority rule. An interim constitution is being drawn up which will entrench powersharing and some degree of regionalism, yet to be settled. When the Constituent Assembly is elected its powers to change the governance of South Africa will be few. What is more, as ANC member Pallo Jordan has pointed out ('The Strategic Debate in the ANC'), the ANC leadership has elevated the tactic of negotiations to its sole strategy to which there is now no alternative. Not even the murder of its leaders and the massacre of its supporters can be allowed to derail negotiations. This puts the regime in a very strong position.

The ANC's programme has changed dramatically; its social democratic content is clearest in relation to the economy. The South African economy is in severe crisis. Investment is at its lowest in 30 years and capital is exiting at the rate of 2.8% of GDP. Last year GDP fell by 2.1 per cent, and it is now attempting to reschedule its foreign debt. The ANC knows that in government it will not be able to meet the aspirations of the black working class; power sharing is intended to spread the political heat. Alongside this they expect that renewed foreign

investment will solve some economic ills and allow the 'government of national unity' to introduce some social programmes. Hence the anxiety to lift sanctions. Mandela, in an interview in *Time* magazine (June 14) argued:

'Our economy and our social life have been completely devastated, in some respects beyond repair. That was the situation in Europe after the last world war. What the Western world did was to mobilise resources and introduce Marshall Plan aid to ensure that the countries of Europe devastated by the war recovered. What we expect is that the Western world, led by the US, should ensure that massive measures of assistance are given to the people of South Africa so we can address their (the people's) expectations.'

This reliance on Western aid and investment is ill-founded. The Marshall Plan was introduced not as an act of charity, but to stave off communism in western Europe. If there is no political threat in South Africa, there may not be much aid. Even supposing that it is forthcoming and would benefit more than a tiny minority of black people, the *Financial Times* has already sounded a warning:

'... new foreign investors may well be thin on the ground. The more so if the new government insists on codes of conduct, social programmes, affirmative action and expatriate and local value-added quotas. The fact is that global competition for inward investment is intense and there are already enough disincentives to invest in South Africa without throwing up new obstacles that do not apply elsewhere in the third world.' (*Survey*, June 1993)

Already the imperialists, unimpressed by moral appeals, are limiting the possibilities for Mandela's social democratic programme. The ANC will be no more loathe to introduce an austerity programme than any bourgeois Labour Party, provided that its position in power is not threatened. As Harry Oppenheimer, former chairman of Anglo-American, says: 'Certainly, I think this will be a government with which business people can work comfortably. We've had a good deal of experience working with very, very difficult governments in Africa - a great deal more difficult than I think this one is likely to be.'

The real solution to meeting the needs of the black majority is the most thorough-going democracy at every level, in government, in the townships, including at the point of production. Without this, millions will remain unemployed, in grinding poverty and homeless. It will require that power is vested in the majority. It is this that the ANC has abandoned in favour of an election next April which will allow some of the majority (not all will be able to register in time) to state a preference which will have no practical consequences. Power will be shared come what may.

And if this fails to neutralise the working class, the imperialists are not even sure that the pretence of

democracy will be wise: 'It would be a shame if South Africa ends up with no more than - in the words of ANC constitutional expert Albie Sachs - "deracialised oppression". But if the choice is between peace, stability and economic growth on the one side - and democracy on the other - South Africa may yet decide democracy is a luxury it cannot afford.' (*Financial Times Survey*, June).

This article will be discussed by North London RCG/FRFI readers group on **Tuesday 14 September** at 7.30pm, Locomotive Pub, Jamestown Road, London NW1 (Camden Town Tube).

Spies

According to ANC-aligned press in South Africa, *New Nation* and the *Weekly Mail*, the ANC has launched an investigation into the activities and death of Solly Smith, formerly Chief Representative in London. Smith apparently confessed to working for state security.

The allegations are based on reports in the German magazine, *Top Secret* which reveals Smith's connections with military intelligence dating back to 1986 at least. Also implicated is Dr Francis Meli, former editor of *Sechaba*, who died, also in suspicious circumstances, in October 1992 in South Africa. In London Smith and Meli were closely associated with a dissident Ghanaian, Kojo Boakye Djan, who, with finance from South African military intelligence and the CIA, set up a publication *African Preview*, and news agency 'Newscope'. Smith was given shares in Newscope and enabled Djan to film anti-apartheid events, including the ANC's 1987 Arusha conference.

Smith and Meli were in the ANC London leadership which was centrally involved in the expulsion of City of London Anti-Apartheid Group from the AAM in 1985. Smith was Chief Representative and Meli was chairman of the Regional Political Committee when Norma and David Kitson were suspended from the ANC in 1985. David had been released from a 20-year sentence in South Africa and on his return to London the ANC insisted that he attack City AA of which his wife Norma and two children were members. He refused to do so, recognising City AA's principled position. When David could not be recruited to attack City AA, he and Norma were suspended. David's funding as lecturer at Ruskin College was withdrawn by David's union MSF, ostensibly at the behest of the ANC. The MSF had promised, while David was in gaol, that it would secure his future. It was precisely over the period that Meli and Smith are alleged to have been active as spies that the ANC and AAM tried to do maximum damage to the reputation of City AA and the Kitson family. After Mandela's release, David and Norma were readmitted to the ANC by the intervention of Mandela and Sisulu. MSF funding, however, has not been restored. The Justice for Kitson Campaign which campaigned on behalf of David has reconvened to demand the restoration of funding and can be contacted at 21b Theberton Street, London N1.

More spies...

According to Stephen Dorril in his book *The Silent Conspiracy*, MI5 were also active against City AA: 'Between 1983 and 1985 the executive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement was put under close scrutiny. According to a senior MI5 officer in F Branch, a particular target was City of London Anti-Apartheid Group, which was regarded as the most militant branch of the organisation. "We were told to investigate it as a front for the Revolutionary Communist Group." Little evidence was found to justify this view. What information was uncovered from telephone tapings was passed on to officials attached to the South African embassy. "They said it would help them apply pressure on the families of South Africans living in England."'

UNILEVER: Sunlight and moonshine

TREVOR RAYNE continues his exploration of the multinationals.

You could hardly get through a day without in some way contributing to Unilever's profits. A typical hour's commercial television entertainment is likely to be sprinkled with three, four or more advertisements for Unilever's familiar cheerful products. Unilever, the world's biggest processed food and household goods company, confronting two-thirds of the world's population with its products: Walls, Persil, Omo, Pepsodent, Birds Eye, Batchelors, Sunsilk, Calvin Klein, Ponds, Vaseline, Brooke Bond, Liptons, Signal, Timotei, Brut and on and on and Oxo. One of the world's first multinational companies, Unilever stands right at the heart of British and European capitalism. Its global reach has for over a century revealed imperialism at work in the colonial and post-colonial eras.

In 1990 Unilever ranked eleventh in the world among transnationals measured by holdings of overseas assets. It is the fourth largest European industrial company with twin headquarters in London and Rotterdam. Its directorship is divided between Britain and the Netherlands. They oversee about 740 subsidiaries in over 60 countries. Unilever operates 41 companies in South Africa. They rejected all calls for sanctions or limitations on their operations in that country.

Unilever does not present breakdowns of investments and profits by regional groups, it is not obliged to by law. However, in 1992 Unilever made £2.1 billion profit from a turnover of £24.7 billion and wage bill of £3.5 billion. The return on capital employed was 16.8 per cent. The market capitalisation of the company worldwide was put at £20.1 billion. This is more than India and sub-Saharan Africa (where Unilever has major interests), with a quarter of the world's population, spend on health care annually.

'Will Australian children like ice-cream with Yeah Yeah Yeah wrapped round it?' Anthony Sampson, *The European*

Unilever pioneered mass advertising. Its 1992 expenditure on advertising and promotion was £2.7 billion,



probably the highest for any company. Unilever monitors markets throughout the world, it assesses Gross National Product and per capita income distribution in different countries. When it identifies a section of the population with sufficient income levels it launches products at them which have succeeded elsewhere where similar income levels are found. Local preferences are adjusted to: blue Omo here, white Omo there, packaging for the 'health conscious', for slimmers, for male shoppers etc. It is termed 'commodity aesthetics' and absorbed a large

part of 1992's £461 million research and development costs.

The packaging, the processing, the additives and colourings, the multiplication of a single product into a dozen brand names is the veneer of seductive opulence with which monopoly capital tempts the world: 'impulse buying' from the producers of Impulse, this year's fragrance. Much of it is wasteful, and real technical advances and useful products like detergent and food are embellished so that their purpose seems more to serve 'product differentiation', what makes the product distinct from its rivals, rather than cleanliness or nutrition. The main rivals being Procter and Gamble, Nestlé and Mars.

Foundation and growth

During the 19th century, Liverpool switched from the trade in African people to the exploitation of labour and materials inside Africa. Among the beneficiaries of the new arrangement was William H Lever, who in 1885 started to make a soap which he called 'Sunlight'. Within 20 years Lever was establishing factories in the USA, Canada, South Africa, Switzerland, Belgium and Germany to meet the rising demand for soap products that came with improving living conditions for many workers and middle class people. The main ingredient for soap was sterin, among whose main sources are palm oil, groundnut oil and copra. In search of the material Lever sent 'explorers' into West Africa. While normally purchasing produce from African peasant farmers Lever also bought land. In 1911 he obtained the right to use 750,000 hectares of African land. He called his Congo base 'Leverville' and wrote of Africans: 'He is a child and a willing child but wants training and handling with patience.'

Such racism accompanied the most ruthless exploitation. Lever Brothers owned the United Africa Company (UAC) and a string of other African concerns. During the First World War Lever's purchase price for palm oil from African farmers was one-eighth what the product fetched in England. Walter Rodney in *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* describes how in 1924 the price of palm oil had been 14 shillings per gallon. In 1928 it was 7 shillings and the following year just 1 shilling and 2 pence. Nevertheless, although the depression years saw some fall in prices paid by trading companies in Europe the UAC continued to make a large profit. In 1934 UAC profits were £6.3 million and a 15 per cent dividend was paid on ordinary shares. Thus was surplus value 'pounded out of the peasant' (Rodney).

A fraction of the profits made were used to diversify UAC holdings across Africa. By the 1930s the UAC owned saw mills, butter factories, soap factories, singlet factories, cold storage plants, engineering and motor repair shops, tugs, ships etc.

During the initial years of its development Lever Brothers' main European contenders in the soap and then margarine business were two Dutch firms and two Austrian firms. The Dutch firms merged to form Margarine Unie in 1927 and this combine in turn merged with Levers to form Unilever in 1928. The new company controlled resources from India and China to Africa and the USA. By-products of soap manufacture expanded the company's product range with glycerine for munitions, cosmetics, shampoos, toothpaste, shaving cream, dyes and perfumes. Paper

mills were bought up for packaging, limestone mines in Bohemia for abrasives, ships for transporting palm oil in bulk. To these were added retail outlets like Lipton's grocery store and MacFisheries. Diversification combined with control of production and distribution stretched from the sowing of seeds to the shop counter.

While becoming a global operation, Europe remained the chief Unilever market and field for investment. Before Britain's entry into the European Community, Unilever was known as the 'seventh member'. Today the EC accounts for 60 per cent of Unilever's turnover. Its chairmen warn against failure to ratify the Maastricht Treaty, its directorship reads like a *Who's Who* of European banking.

The German connection

'In the Sports Palace we were Hitler's personal guests of honour and were shown onto a podium next to Goebbels and Goering'. (Paul Rijkens, former Unilever Senior Director)



Under the 1919 Treaty of Versailles, Germany lost its patents. One of those was Persil, originally produced by the German firm Henkel. It became a Unilever brand. Through its Dutch and previously established Lever Brothers possessions, Unilever owned cheese interests, a printing works, a fishing business, an ice-cream factory, a shipping company together with its fats and edible oils business in Germany at the start of the Second World War. Karl Blessing, former aide to Nazi Minister of Economics, became director of Unilever after the war and then proceeded to become president of the Bundesbank in 1958. Hitler is reported to have held Unilever as a model for a future successful German colonial enterprise.

Africa

In 1978 a quarter of Unilever's employees were in Africa. That year the company's turnover of \$10 billion was greater than the combined GNPs of 25 African countries. After the purchase of Brooke Bond in 1984 Unilever acquired 62 per cent of the Australian tea market, 30 per cent of tea sales in Britain and Canada, 49 per cent of the US market and 95 per cent of packet tea sales through India and Pakistan. In 1984 Unilever had a 35 per cent stake in the global tea market. Similar proportions apply for coffee. Between 1960-82 African tea production increased six-fold and coffee production four-fold. Meanwhile, Africans consumed 20 per

cent less food in 1982 than in 1960. Unilever developed a trade in carnations from Africa that provided year-round button-holes back in Europe.

In the 1950s, at the peak of the independence movement in Ghana, Unilever, through the UAC, and the British TUC collaborated to restrict the political ambitions of the UAC employees' union, attempting to form a narrow company-union scope for negotiations.

India

Hindustan Lever is a household name in India among its wealthier population. Tea pickers in southern India could expect to earn about 60 pence a day in 1985, employed under the Brooke Bond logo. Employees in the detergent, cosmetic, toothpaste and talcum manufacturing factories run by Unilever could expect to earn 30 pence a day in the 1980s. When the workers began to form trade unions and demand wage increases, Unilever responded with dismissals and the increased use of contract labour. Sixty-hour weeks for fifty pence a day, less than the legal minimum wage, was a typical contract worker's reward.

Philippines

The Philippines Refining Company is a Unilever subsidiary, bought up in 1920. It has diversified from coconut oil into 'Breeze' and 'Drive' detergents, Lifebuoy and Lux, 'Close-up' gel, Sunsilk shampoo, packet soups and powdered fruit drinks. The produce is mainly destined for the USA and European markets. When employees struck in 1983 they were ordered back to work by the Ministry of Labour on grounds that the strike was 'affecting the national interest.'

Lords of the Manor

Unilever's vital contribution to British imperialism has ensured that its chiefs are hand-picked and located at the centre of British and European power. Lever was made a baronet in 1911, a baron in 1917 and Viscount in 1922. He raised his own battalion to fight at the Somme. In the Second World War the Ministry of Food, Oils and Fats division was run by former Unilever employees who continued to be paid by Unilever. The Dutch wing of Unilever has been tied to the Rotterdam Bank, Philips and ministers in the Dutch government. Current directors include Karl Otto Pohl, former President of the Bundesbank; Lord Haslam, previously chairman of Tate and Lyle, British Steel, British Coal and currently a Director of the Bank of England. Other members regale BP, Barclays Bank, Total, Bass, the Bank of Ireland, Citibank, Boeing and Dow Jones board rooms. Noteworthy are a number of former heads of the civil service in the British Foreign Office, Department of Trade and Industry and Diplomatic Service.

Today those gentlemen, for males they uniformly are, attend opening ceremonies for ice-cream and soap factories in China, Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic. They are defending their 40 per cent of the European ice-cream market, valued at £6 billion a year. They are, as a 1906 cartoon condemning Lever Brothers for serving customers short measures and shoddy goods, would have it, the proprietors of Port Moonshine not Port Sunlight.

References: Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. *The New Internationalist*, June 1987

In our manifesto we showed how the fall in the rate of profit on industrial capital in the decade of the 1970s and early 1980s had led to a rapid rise in the export of capital and to an enormously strengthened role for banking and commercial capital. British imperialism, we argued, 'second only to the United States, [was] through its banking system, the imperialist power gaining a commanding position in this process.'

The myth that Britain's industrial decline in the twentieth century is synonymous with Britain's decline as a world imperialist power has been strongly challenged in an important two volume work on British imperialism by P J Cain and A G Hopkins². In this work, covering 300 years of British economic history, the financial and commercial imperialism of the City of London is seen as the central driving force in Britain's rise to dominant world economic power and the crucial factor in long delaying Britain's decline in the face of the challenge from other much stronger industrial capitalist powers. 'The familiar story of Britain's decline as a world power merits reassessment in the light of evidence of her continuing imperialist aspirations and her underestimated successes' (Vol 1 p473).

They give historical examples:

'Despite the declining competitiveness of her manufactures, Britain's ability to impose her will within and beyond the empire was still unmatched in 1914 because the London capital market remained the largest, most efficient and hence most competitive in the world - as Germany and France were well aware' (ibid).

And again in the 1930s, Britain was far less affected by the world slump than other imperialist rivals, including the United States. A 'resurgence of her imperialist ambitions' based on the Sterling Area, 'the most important international economic bloc', made Britain the 'only truly world power of consequence' challenging the position the US had begun to occupy in Canada, South America and China (Vol 2 p6).

It was the need to fight two world wars to defend its imperialist interests and the British empire from the challenge of German and, in the second world war, Japanese imperialism, rather than Britain's lack of industrial competitiveness, which drastically weakened the British economy. And only during the second world war did the mantle of dominant world imperialist power pass conclusively and irrevocably to the strongest industrial power, the United States.

During the first imperialist war some British investments were permanently lost as a result of the Russian Revolution, others were liquidated, especially those in the United States, to pay for the war. In addition, the British government was saddled with a dollar debt of about £750m. Most United States business was permanently lost to the London markets after the war and the City faced competition from New York and later Paris (Vol 2 p40-42).

The second imperialist war forced Britain to make the inevitable choice of economic dependence on the United States rather than military conquest by Germany, once the policy of appeasement had failed - a policy, as Cain and Hopkins show, backed by influential sections of the ruling class, in particular City and financial interests, in an attempt to avoid economic disruption internationally (Vol 2 p94ff). Britain's survival in the war depended crucially on its ability to borrow from the United States. British assets had to be sold abroad, often at ruinous prices before United States aid was given (Vol 2 p270). At the end of the war Britain was almost bankrupt and totally dependent for its recovery on further aid from the United States.

A History of British Imperialism

In 1984 we argued that the British labour movement subscribed to a myth which is also peddled by most groups on the left of the Labour Party. 'It is the argument that the decline of Britain's industrial production shows that Britain is a declining imperialist power or not even an imperialist power at all.'¹



British Marines in action - Malaya 1950

Nevertheless, even as international financial hegemony passed to the United States, Britain's ruling elite was determined to re-establish sterling as a strong international currency, revitalise the empire, and make full use of the empire's massive sterling balances held in London for post-war recovery. By 1945, as a result of Britain's debts with Sterling Area countries, these balances were seven times as large as Britain's gold and dollar reserves.

The United States after the war was determined to drive home its dominant position by forcing Britain to abandon its discriminatory trading bloc based on the empire (imperial preference system) and insisting on the promise of sterling's rapid return to convertibility in return for a substantial dollar loan. However, the shift in priorities which came with the Cold War softened the United States' approach and British arguments that the British empire was a bulwark against communism were accepted. The empire played a crucial part in Britain's post-war reconstruction, in restoring the pound as an international currency and in providing Britain with desperately needed dollars to pay for its imports (Vol 2 p105, p234, p270). At the close of the 1940s 'sterling remained a formidable force in world trade, accounting for about half of international transactions' (Vol 2 p280).

War and Imperialism

Cain and Hopkins' argue that the approach to imperialist war argued by the classical Marxist tradition at the turn of the century deserves more attention than it has received over the last 30 years. Part 4 in Volume 1 is entitled 'Redivvying the World'. And they appear to agree with the Marxist argument that world power relations had to change drastically in 1914 to bring them in line with changes in the world economy brought about by the uneven development of capitalism (Vol 2 p453-4).

With Germany's rise as an industrial power, economic rivalry was fundamental to the dispute between Britain and Germany leading up to

the first imperialist war and was global in scope. Germany's decision to build a large navy made an alliance between them impossible without Germany accepting permanent naval inferiority. Conflict was inevitable and 'however hesitant Britain was to enter the war it offered the opportunity to destroy Germany's burgeoning overseas power, at least temporarily, and to preserve Britain's economic dominance overseas - a dominance without which she was of little account in the world' (Vol 1 p456-465).

The second imperialist war 'was the culmination of international rivalries' which were accelerated by the world slump. The failure to accommodate the 'have not' powers of Germany and Japan made war inevitable (Vol 2 p7). Cain and Hopkins remind us of a truth many, including those on the left, have conveniently forgotten. In the case of Britain:

'It is now well known that World War II was fought to defend the empire as well as to defeat fascism, that the battle over the shape of post-war colonial policy was continued as the bombs fell on London...' (Vol 2 p234).

Confronted with this broad analysis we find somewhat disingenuous the comment of the authors: 'The analysis presented in this chapter does not imply that Marxist theories of imperialism are unassailable' (Vol 1 p455, n18).

In this context the Leninist approach receives most criticism for 'limiting imperialism to the finance-capitalist stage of development'; ignoring the importance of the export of capital before the turn of the century; for suggesting 'imperialism was the last stage of capitalism and that the imperialist powers had lost their economic dynamism' and for claiming that 'the economic differences between Britain and Germany made war inevitable.'

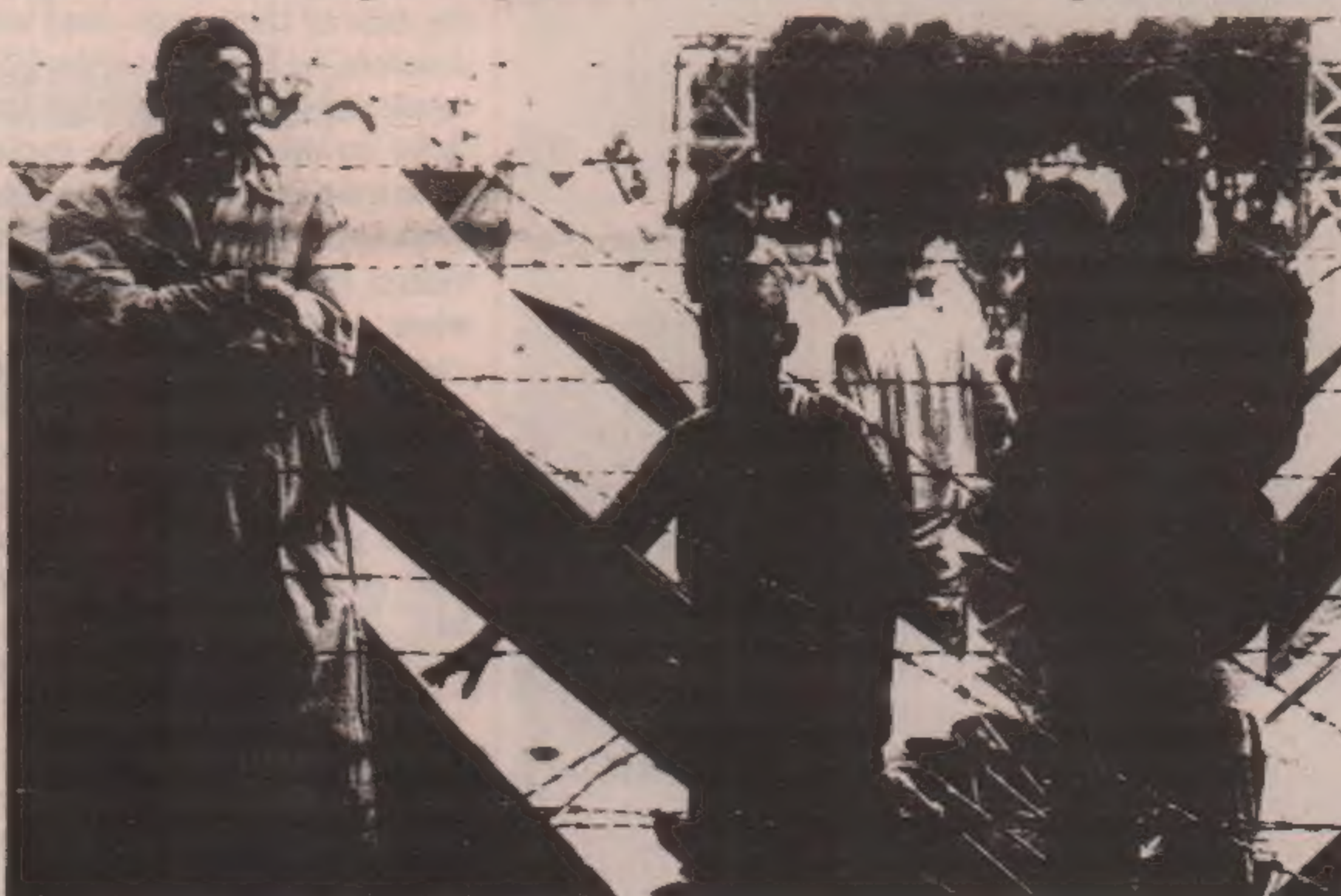
These are important issues and cannot be adequately dealt with in the course of this review. But a number of points do need to be made on the differences between Lenin's method and the authors' method, as well as on their overall concept of imperialism.

What is imperialism?

Lenin's analysis of imperialism is a political attack on an opportunist trend in the working class movement represented by, among others, the ex-Marxist Karl Kautsky. The argument for ultra-imperialism and a peaceful division of the globe is not merely 'far-fetched' as Cain and Hopkins suggest but, in the hands of the Kautskys, was an argument undermining the revolutionary trend in the working class movement, betraying socialism and giving free scope to social democratic forces to win the working class away from internationalism to the defence of their own imperialist nation. Lenin not only sought to show the real nature of imperialism at the turn of the century but he also explained how the opportunist trends were inevitably produced with the development of imperialism and why a split occurred in the working class movement.

Lenin was fully aware that 'colonial policy and imperialism existed before the latest stage of capitalism,

Central to Cain and Hopkins' view of British imperialism is their concept of a 'gentlemanly class'. In the early part of the nineteenth century, with aristocratic power in decline, power and prestige devolved on a new 'gentlemanly class' arising from the non-industrial service sector of British capitalism. At its centre was the City of London already 'incorporated into the inner circles of political power' and by the mid-Victorian period, as a result of free trade and overseas investment, being propelled towards leadership of the global economy rather than a colonial one. The landed aristocracy could mitigate their decline only by reaching an accommodation with this new 'gentlemanly class'. The public schools and an Oxbridge education gave ideological cohesion to this new ruling elite. The most senior British officials, at home or abroad, were drawn largely from its ranks. These elites invested to sustain their 'gentlemanly life-style', distanced themselves from the productive acti-



British torture camp at Hola in Kenya 1954

and even before capitalism'. And that 'even the capitalist colonial policy of previous stages of capitalism is essentially different from the colonial policy of finance capital.'³ He also noted that two important features of imperialism were already observed in Great Britain in the middle of the nineteenth century - vast colonial possessions and a monopolist position in the world market. Further these developments split the British working class, strengthened opportunism among them and caused the temporary decay of the working class movement. This crucial development resulting from the unique character of British economic history is not even discussed by Cain and Hopkins.

Cain and Hopkins are writing 'economic history'. Their 'principal aim is to understand the causes of British imperialism, not to pass judgment on them' (Vol 1 p47). They have a concept of imperialism which is universal. 'The distinguishing feature of imperialism is not that it takes a specific economic, cultural or political form, but that it involves an incursion, or an attempted incursion, into the sovereignty of another state' (op cit p42-3). This inevitably restricts their ability to understand the economic laws or the class dynamics of either capitalism or imperialism.

vities of manufacturing and industry and became the financiers of British and overseas government. However they were not idle, say Cain and Hopkins, but 'operated in a world where leisure was often difficult to distinguish from work' (Vol 1 p53 - 134).

What all this talk of 'gentlemanly life-styles' and a 'gentlemanly class' hides is the reality of British imperialism, its colonial possessions and and its dominance of the world economy. And how this British ruling elite sustained itself on the brutal and ruthless exploitation of oppressed peoples, which was the source of their rentier incomes and the material basis of their power and status. But then that would be passing judgment on them!

There are excellent chapters on British overseas expansion and imperialism in India, Africa, the Ottoman Empire and Persia, China, and North and South America. But we never get a real explanation of the driving force behind imperialist expansion. The subjective explanation of maintaining the property income and privilege at home of the British ruling elite in a time of social upheaval and revolution (Vol 1 p45) lacks conviction. At times it would appear that the need to invest 'surplus capital' abroad was due to lack of investment outlets, low rates of return and

dynamic industrial demand at home (Vol 1 p187-8). Elsewhere this position is rejected (Vol 1 p382). The distinction between productive and unproductive labour is avoided because it fails to acknowledge the capitalist qualities of the service sector activities of their 'gentlemanly class' (Vol 1 p37). All this confusion arises from Cain and Hopkins failure to understand the dynamics of wealth creation and profitable production under capitalism.

Now we can see the significance of Lenin's argument that imperialism is the last stage of capitalism. The export of capital, the creation of large financial corporations and capitalist monopolies and the emergence of rentier states, and growing predominance of financiers and bankers, was the consequence of the increasing problems of finding profitable outlets for 'surplus capital' in all the dominant capitalist countries at the turn of the twentieth century. It was this that Lenin called imperialism, a product of capitalism at that particular time. The world had already been partitioned, there were no new outlets for profitable investment etc, so it now had to be repartitioned according to the economic power of the major capitalist states. And how else could the matter be decided except by military conflict?

But the outcome was not what Lenin or anyone else had expected. Although capitalism was overthrown in Russia, opportunism and chauvinism in all the major working class movements - something which Lenin could explain - prevented revolution in all the developed capitalist/imperialist countries. After a second world war, there was an outcome which, although very different, was similar in impact to what Kautsky thought possible under his 'far-fetched' ultra-imperialism. One country, the United States of America, totally dominated the world economy. It was this outcome, which Lenin could not have predicted, which allowed the 'peaceful' rapid expansion of capitalism of the major imperialist countries. The wars and revolutions, the poverty and oppression were confined, for the time being, to the rest of the world.

But the laws of capitalism did not change. The massive export of capital, the growth of financial and transnational corporations with global aspirations continued, and as Japan and Germany rebuilt their economies to become powerful competitors of the United States, inter-imperialist rivalries have reappeared in similar form to those Lenin outlined at the turn of the century. In this respect imperialism is the last stage of capitalism.

The failure of Cain and Hopkins to understand the dynamics of capitalist production and imperialism is responsible for the very weak section of the book dealing with the period from the end of the post-war boom. That is probably why they have underestimated the continuing relative strength of British imperialism today in the form of its powerful international companies, financial corporations and the City of London. It also explains their failure to examine the rapid rise in the export of capital that began in the mid-1970s and was the starting point of this review.

The composition of the British ruling elite might have changed but its determination to reinforce and defend the interests of British imperialism in the face of Britain's continuing industrial decline is still the powerful driving force behind the British economy.

David Yaffe

1. The revolutionary road to communism in Britain Larkin Publications 1984 p51-52.
2. P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins *British Imperialism: Innovation and Expansion 1688-1914* pbk £16.99 (Vol 1) and *British Imperialism: Crisis and Destruction 1914-1990* pbk £11.99 (Vol 2). Longman 1993. All page numbers in the text refer to these volumes.
3. 'Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism', *Collected Works*, Moscow 1964, in particular p187, p260, p283, but it all needs to be read.



The rise of racism throughout Europe was one of the major themes of the RCG's July Dayschool **Fight Racism! Fight Capitalism! Fight Imperialism! – By Any Means Necessary.** We reprint MAXINE WILLIAMS' speech to the dayschool.

THE POISONOUS ROOTS OF RACISM

To understand racism it must be placed in its political context – the existence of imperialism and the particular stage which capitalism has reached in the late twentieth century.

Socialism or barbarism

Every day brings forth new evidence of the crisis that is gripping imperialism. In Europe at least 17 million people, 12 per cent of the workforce, are unemployed officially. Civil war, unleashed by imperialist interests and their local nationalist forces, rages in former Yugoslavia, leaving tens of thousands dead and millions stateless. In Europe and the USA, governments are carrying through sweeping attacks on working class social benefits, trade union rights and living standards. In Germany for example, they are cutting £8 billion from state expenditure at a time when, in what was East Germany, unemployment is raging. In Britain the income of the poorest 10 per cent of the population fell 14 per cent in real terms between 1979 and 1991. The poorest half of the population now gets only 25 per cent of national income. Amongst that half figure overwhelmingly the old, women, black people, the unemployed.

In the USA a President who was talked of by British Labour leftists as a model for a future Labour government, sends Cruise missiles into heavily populated Baghdad, accompanying the missiles with the warning, 'don't tread on us'. This was said apparently without irony to Iraq, which two years ago the imperialists tried to 'bomb back into the stone age'.

So this is the New World Disorder. This is the system which boasted of its own rationality and technical and economic superiority when it stood finally after 70 years with its boot on the neck of the former socialist countries and said, 'We've won'.

As Marcuse said of the essence of capitalism:

'The union of growing productivity and growing destruction; the brinkmanship of annihilation; the surrender of thought, hope and fear to the delusions of the powers that be; the preservation of misery in the face of unprecedented wealth constitute the most impartial indictment of this society; its sweeping rationality, which propels efficiency and growth, is itself irrational.'

It is an irrational system of organised banditry, the sophisticated organisation of poverty and death. How else can we view the recent competition between groups of workers in Plymouth and Scotland for the privilege of keeping their jobs by winning a contract to produce Trident nuclear submarines, weapons of mass destruction? Such an event is not surprising when you consider that virtually the only sector of the British economy which is growing is the arms trade, a trade which not only turned Margaret Thatcher's son from a racing driver to a multi-millionaire but

has also stuffed the coffers of the Tory Party with donations from grateful arms dealers.

Increasingly we are seeing the veils that disguised the hideous reality of capitalism in the imperialist countries during the post-war boom, ripped away. We are seeing the naked reality – militarism, nationalism, poverty in the rich countries and starvation in the poor. They are re-colonising those areas of the world that were afforded some slight protection by the existence of the socialist camp. Nor will they be satisfied until they get them all, even Cuba. We see their reversion to outright colonialism today in Somalia whose inhabitants, being poor and black, do not attract the sympathy of the world's media.

Such events show the full force of the words which socialists used in past eras – the choice is between socialism and barbarism.

The rise of racism

There has been an unprecedented increase in levels of racism in the imperialist countries. Governments have moved to further tighten immigration controls. Germany is changing its asylum laws to prevent entry for refugees; Britain is doing the same with its Asylum Act to prevent refugees entering or having the right to effective appeal against deportation. In France the government is aiming at zero immigration and appears to be modelling its police operations in black areas on those of the Los Angeles Police Department. The French Parliament has been debating an amendment which would allow police to carry out identity checks on anyone suspected of being foreign but with consummate hypocrisy has said that the judgement of who is foreign must not be based on how people look. Japan is stepping up its deportations of Iranians as well as Chinese and other immigrants from South East Asia.

Alongside these developments has gone a sharp rise in fascist activity. In Germany for example, racist attacks take place every day with only the more dramatic ones, where whole families die in firebombings, reaching the world news. In Britain official figures record 8,000 racist attacks a year. Although fascist organisations are growing, their growth is limited by the fact that the governments in office in these countries are already carrying out much of their racist programme. In Germany the government has blatantly used the fascist organisations as a political tool to get through immigration controls, warning the public that without such measures the fascist groups will grow beyond control. This partnership explains the apparent government and police impotence in the face of fascist attacks. In Germany we see most clearly the intimate connection between state racism and the unofficial racists.

The right wing groups find a ready base in the white working class, particularly

the young, now facing unemployment. They have no tradition to draw on that guards against this ideology. Instead they and their parents have belonged to Labour movements, like the British Labour Party, whose slogan was never An Injury to One is an Injury to All but rather: an Injury to Foreigners before an Injury to Us, an Injury to Black People and We Will Keep Quiet, an Injury to Women Does Not Count.

Nationalism and racism: the evil twins

The rise of racism in this period accompanies a general rise in nationalism. The rise of nationalism in Europe, the USA and Japan flows inevitably from the growing competition between imperialist powers to divide up the world into economic and political spheres of influence. Such a tendency always exists in imperialism. But today, the crisis has given it new impetus as has the fact that the two economically strongest powers, Germany and Japan, do not have a world imperialist role to match their economic might. What begins as an inability to agree about trade or diplomacy has the capacity to end in war as it did in 1914. The signs are there. Germany and Japan are altering the constitutions imposed on them after their defeat in 1945, to allow them to use their military forces abroad. The big powers cannot agree on the GATT trade negotiations and continually threaten more protectionism. The USA has set up its own North American Free Trade Area. Europe is following suit with its protected markets, wishing to keep out imports particularly from the Pacific rim countries. They each protect their vital interests. This fight of 'hostile brothers' has its political reflection in their inability to agree over what to do about former Yugoslavia. The British and others are complaining that French troop presence there has begun to give France unfair influence. Germany has vetoed any use of sanctions to prevent its 'protectorate' Croatia from grabbing any more of Bosnia. The USA has drawn its line over Macedonia and said it will intervene if fighting spreads there because this, the old Ottoman Empire, is its sphere.

In such circumstances, nationalism takes on a new respectability and force. Who is surprised when the German Foreign Minister calls for a new German 'patriotism' or the USA beats its chest and insists that it is the dominant power? A new struggle for colonies is beginning.

These powers will intervene to protect their right to exploit the local materials and population, against rival powers. Having spread poverty and starvation in Africa, the imperialists now increasingly say that the African people are not capable of ruling themselves and must be supervised. Such crude racism has not been heard since many African nations won independence. A new racist mythology has been born and echoes earlier colonial racism.

Although fascist organisations are growing, their growth is limited by the fact that the governments in office in these countries are already carrying out much of their racist programme.'

Imperialism and racism

Racism takes on a particular role in a period of economic crisis. In the early post-war period, the imperialist countries suffered from a labour shortage, particularly in the public sector and unmodernised industrial sectors. They drew in immigrant labour to do this work. With crisis and unemployment, the capitalists no longer need to draw on the world reserve army of labour created by imperialism in the poorer countries. Immigration policy has been relentlessly tightened. Those immigrants who came in the post-war period and were in many countries not even granted citizenship, are now being encouraged or forced to leave. New immigrants are kept out. In the wake of the drive to keep out or expel such labour, a growth of racism is inevitable.

John Major showed how respectable racism has become when he urged a strong perimeter fence around Europe: 'We must not be wide open to all comers simply because Paris, Rome or London seem more attractive than Bombay or Algiers'. He urged Europeans to guard against a tidal wave of 'illegal immigrants, drug pushers, criminals and terrorists'. Having thus associated these disparate groups, he went on to argue that immigration controls must be tightened in order to safeguard racial harmony in Britain. British governments, Labour and Tory, often use this argument. For them, the best way to have good 'race relations' would be to have no black people at all.

The issue of immigration controls reveals the reality of imperialist relations which underlie racism. This we must understand if an effective anti-racist movement is to be built - a minority of the world is wealthy because billions live in poverty in the poor nations. The fundamental injustice of that imperialist relation - the division between oppressed and oppressor nations - is mirrored in the sordid record of deportations, raids and virginity tests that have made up the British immigration policy. Racism is the form taken in imperialist countries by national oppression, duplicating internally the oppression which imperialism creates externally.

It was common in the past for sections of the left to view racism as an outdated ideology, a hangover from slavery and Britain's imperial past that could be corrected by educating people. But racism is not something from the past, it is continually being recreated in the relations of imperialism.

Imperialism maintains its rule over the oppressed nations through political, economic and military means. To maintain a situation in which, for example, wages in Thailand are 100th those of Europe, requires an imperialist-backed regime in Thailand of a repressive character. The imperialists foster such regimes and, should a regime come to power in an oppressed nation that in any way reflects the will of the masses, they starve, strangle or crush it, as they did in Grenada, as they are trying to do to Cuba. Imperialism also maintains its power through unequal trade terms and the imposition of massive debts on poor nations. The result is that those nations cannot develop freely and their inhabitants starve or live in poverty and are often forced to migrate to seek work.

This systematic oppression and dehumanisation of the oppressed is racism. Those conditions that imperialism creates in the poor nations are racist. The fact that millions of children in these nations die every year from poverty because the imperialists will not allow the people to rise above the level of earning 100th of European wages, is regarded as natural, like the sun rising. Thus is two thirds of humanity, mainly non-white, disregarded. Europe and its offspring continue to exercise domination and to justify such domination with racist ideologies of backwardness. They may have been ruder in the past, for example when the Labour Party programme of 1917 said that nobody contends that the black races are fit to govern themselves' and referred to them as the 'non-adult' races. But the actions of the new colonialists in Somalia and their justification show the same contempt.

The split in the working class

Just as imperialism created a split in the working class on an international level, with an aristocracy of labour tied to imperialism in the rich countries, so then did it recreate this split internally. Labour and the trade unions reacted with predictable chauvinism to immigrant labour. They made no serious effort to recruit from those areas such as catering where the worst conditions prevailed. Where immigrant workers in those sectors organised, the trade unions sabotaged their efforts, as they have done with the Burnsalls strike. As unemployment started to climb, previously unattractive jobs became more desirable and by the late 1960s, the TUC was calling for a strict quota on recruitment of immigrants to the catering industry and 'expressed surprise that no applicants for jobs could be found for which aliens were recruited who spoke no English and were without training'. In 1967 the TUC opposed anti-discrimination legislation as 'people to be protected might be put in a privileged position'.

The extent of racism today

The effects of Race Relations legislation and anti-discrimination measures have not begun to erode discrimination. Instead what these policies have done is to slightly enlarge a black middle class.

68% of Afro-Caribbean workers still work in manual and unskilled jobs compared to 78% over twenty years ago when such jobs were far more plentiful. Shift work patterns point to the kinds of work which black people do. In Leicester in 1990, 31% of Asians worked shifts compared to 17% of white men. In the 1970s nationally, 31% of black males worked shifts compared to 15% for white males. Nothing much has changed. Black people remain overwhelmingly concentrated in the lowest paid and least secure sections of the workforce. Today the rate of unemployment for black people is 22% compared to 9% of the white population. That figure will worsen and the policy of the British state will continue to be heavy policing of black areas and the tacit encouragement of racist attacks. By such means they hope to prevent black people

'There is no separation between the fight to defend independence in Africa or Cuba and the interests of black people. It is the same struggle. Cuba has shown that the precondition for overcoming racism is freedom from imperialism, is socialism.'

The Labour Party has faithfully represented this aristocracy of labour. On issues of immigration and race relations legislation it has had a more or less continuous policy of bipartisanship, as it has on the Irish question and on every issue that closely touches the interests of imperialism. This policy has been that there should be tight immigration controls - it was a Labour government which introduced the 1968 Immigration Act and enthusiastically operated the 1971 Act - coupled with cosmetic anti-discrimination legislation. Labour has not only supported immigration controls but has supported every major attack by the state. Nothing frightens Labour more than the prospect of black resistance.

It was Labour which used the police to smash the Grunwick strike. Labour also used the police to suppress anti-fascist demonstrations in London, most shamefully in Southall in 1979. We should not forget the brutality of what a Labour government did in Southall when the black and Asian community mobilised to prevent a National Front meeting from taking place. Labour sent in 5,000 police and sealed off the area. So frenzied was the police assault that 1,000 people were injured and Blair Peach was murdered. 800 people were arrested, 342 charged and an 85% conviction rate resulted in heavy fines, gaol sentences and even witnesses attending court cases were bound over. Labour Prime Minister Callaghan blamed these events on 'outside agitators'. Two years later Labour wholeheartedly supported the suppression of the 1981 uprisings led by black people and the subsequent imprisonment of 700 people. It has consistently opposed any organised self-defence against racist attacks labelling such defence 'criminal'. Labour is well tuned to the needs of British capitalism.

fighting back and, as they so nearly did in 1981, giving a lead to other increasingly impoverished sections of the working class.

The results of discrimination and repression are best shown by the extraordinarily high imprisonment figures for black people. 16% of the male and 28% of the female prison population is black. Equally revealing and shocking are the figures for mental health commitments - in the mid 1980s, 36% of mental health commitments were of black people. These statistics reflect the horrific reality of racism in Britain. As do the rising number of racist attacks.

In April this year, young Stephen Lawrence was murdered by racists in south east London. A terrible toll is being taken by the racists. Last year official figures record 8,000 racist attacks, nearly double those for 1991. The real figure could be ten times higher. Many such attacks go unreported as the victims rightly fear that they will be arrested.

When young Asians fought to defend themselves against fascists in Drummond Street, they were arrested. When Satpal Ram was attacked by six whites he killed one in self defence and is now serving life. Black people are twice as likely as whites to be assaulted on the streets and three times as likely to be murdered. The current arguments about the right to self-defence clearly do not stretch to cover those most under threat.

The police ignore racist attacks, when black people organise the police attack them, as they did on the recent march against the racist murder of Stephen Lawrence. Reading press reports you would have been hard put to know that the police had attacked the march. Only because a press photographer was photographed being assaulted by police was there any indication of what had taken

place. Unfortunately the Anti-Racist Alliance spokesperson Marc Wadsworth, himself a Labour careerist, did not help matters by firing off letters to the press about 'outside agitators' causing the trouble, sounding uncannily like Jim Callaghan in Southall in 1979. Thus was another police assault covered up.

The legacy of black struggle

To look at the question of racism and not to consider the question of how the fight back will develop, would be pessimistic. Every generation of the black struggle has produced lessons. It is important today, when all oppositional movements are weak, to recall these. It is especially important because at present we are seeing various anti-racist organisations come into existence which are apparently tied to political trends, often Labour left trends, as in the case of the Anti-Racist Alliance. And we see also the strange re-emergence of the Anti-Nazi League.

These organisations often place loyalty to the Labour Party above the interests of the black struggle and drag the movement back from lessons it had already learned in the 1970s and '80s. The ANL was thoroughly discredited in the 1970s when it refused to come to the aid of black people opposing a fascist march in 1978 in East London, instead holding a carnival in South London. It justified this on the grounds that to confront the fascists would mean fighting the police and this they were not prepared to do.

With such organisations able to dominate the agenda we are seeing one of the consequences of the state's twin tactics against the black movement, repression and incorporation. Those that won't give up or join some phoney state-funded organisation, are put in prison or harassed until they are too exhausted to continue. After 1981, 700 people went to prison and lots of them carried into prison some tremendous political lessons. Unfortunately there was no movement for them to come out to and spread those lessons. They saw the devastation caused by opportunist forces following the rising, they saw the vicious condemnation of their actions launched by the Labour Party, but for the most part they are no longer around to pass on lessons that would make the Anti-Racist Alliance sound very politically lame. A movement is the memory of the class that it represents. But the black movement is constantly disrupted by repression and it is hard for that memory to continue as a live political force.

But there is a deep, strong legacy of the black struggle and any future movement will draw on it.

Self defence is no offence

That was a cornerstone of the Black Panthers programme and obviously in the USA they took that to the conclusion of the right to bear arms. In Britain in the '70s this slogan became the rallying point of the Asian Youth Movements fighting fascist attacks. This slogan attacks one of the fundamentals of bourgeois society, that the state has a monopoly of violence. But the black movement said 'No, we have an absolute right to stop our people being murdered by defending ourselves.'

A telling incident recently took place at Kingsway College, London which is reported in a very interesting anti-racist magazine called *Kingsway Fighter*. The students called a meeting and used the famous poster of Black Panther leader Huey Newton, bearing a rifle, to advertise the meeting. The authorities hysterically ripped the posters down and the students held a series of protests. Why such a response to the image of Huey Newton, when you recall that there was no such response to images of Rambo? Of course, Rambo is white and slaughters Vietnamese people, but Huey Newton represents a movement of black people fighting back, so under no circumstances will they tolerate this image influencing a new generation of young black people.

The fight against racism will confront the British state

That was learned over and over again in the US and here from the 1960s to the

1980s. If you, for example, confront the fascists on the streets, you will immediately face the police, the courts and, very soon, prison. If you want to fight racism you cannot avoid the issue of the state's immigration laws which are specifically racist laws. You cannot fight racism without coming up against the mother and father of racism - the British state. In the 1970s the ANL attempted to avoid the issue of state racism, specifically refusing to oppose immigration controls. This path in the end led to impotence even in the face of fascist attacks.

Self-help and organisation

This was the key to the Black Panther organisation with their community programmes, education and food programmes and was taken up and still survives in the black population here. This principle is important to all of the oppressed. It rejects the soft policing of the British state, the state funding, the well-paid community workers. It is a matter of pride, survival, and is part of the process of revolutionary growth. The miners' wives discovered it during the strike of 1984. The soft policemen who appear to help the oppressed are one of the means of misleading them.

Anti-imperialism

There is a rich legacy from the anti-colonial struggles of Africa, but also from black leaders like Malcolm X who, before his murder, was arguing strongly for unity of the black movement and anti-imperialist forces worldwide. The fight against racism cannot be separated from the fight against its origins, imperialism. There is no separation between the fight to defend independence in Africa or Cuba and the interests of black people. It is the same struggle. Cuba has shown that the precondition for overcoming racism is freedom from imperialism, is socialism.

George Jackson perhaps best sums up this revolutionary legacy. His great work, *Blood in My Eye*, was finished a week before his murder in the gaol where he spent 12 years on a charge of stealing \$70. He was a determined black revolutionary and his message has many lessons for the struggle today. He identified three stages in the black struggle: revolutionary nationalism and identification with Africa, riot by revolutionary black America and finally, scientific socialism. He was a communist, which explains why his memory has been so carefully erased. He argued that the real enemy of black people is capitalism and imperialism. Anyone who owes any allegiance to capitalism is 'our enemy'. He called for an alliance between the peoples in the imperialist nations and the oppressed nations. Only those close to the 'heart of the monster' would be able to finally destroy it. He understood that the official labour movements had been bought off and could not defend the oppressed people. He believed that unity with white workers was possible but that it must be on an anti-racist, anti-capitalist programme. George Jackson understood the enemy in a way that puts what passes for left wing politics today to shame:

'The history of the USA, the blood-soaked, urine-steeped essence of its being, the wreckage and demise of its human character under the wheels of a two-hundred-year headlong flight with heedless, frightened animals at the controls of a machine that has mastered them, allows for no appeal on a strictly ideological level.' '... Can power be seriously challenged without a response, will the robber baron, the tycoon, the fuhrer allow us to seize his privilege without resistance? Can we steal it away from the greatest bandit of all time by sleight of hand alone? Incredible!'

The black movement has a legacy to be proud of and one which will guide the movement in years to come. ■

This article will be discussed by North London RCG/FRF readers group on **Tuesday 24 August** at 7.30pm, Locomotive pub, Jamestown Road, London NW1 (Camden Town tube).

Marxism and opportunism in the Filipino revolutionary movement

In the Philippines, a far reaching debate is underway about the future of the Filipino revolution. Within the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and the National Democratic Front (NDF), this debate pits the communist leadership fighting to destroy imperialism and capitalism against social democratic factions who believe it is possible to reform capitalism. EDDIE ABRAHAMS examines the communist battle against opportunism.

It is testimony to the profound roots of Marxism in the Philippines that the social democrats have not succeeded in derailing the revolutionary movement. Whilst not necessarily agreeing with every position of the CPP leadership, we recognise that its defence of Marxism has international significance. Taking place in a movement with mass support among the working class and peasantry it has a vital and living reality and stands in sharp contrast to the record of many other communist parties and anti-imperialist movements.

Since the collapse of the socialist bloc many revolutionary movements have made a rapid transition to social democracy. Marxist trends have been isolated and marginalised. The driving force in this process has been the privileged petit-bourgeoisie which had previously tied its fortunes to the working class and socialist movement. With the latter's collapse and the retreat of the working class, the petit-bourgeoisie, forgetting about the working class and peasantry – the vast majority of humanity – has opted for compromise with imperialism and capitalism. In exchange for some crumbs from capitalism it now works to undermine socialist revolution.

At the very moment the capitalist system is plunged into crisis, social



democrats are arguing that there is some third road, short of socialist revolution, that can resolve the fundamental problems of humanity. There is no such road. Even in the most 'advanced' 'welfare capitalist' nations, the ruling class is dismantling the welfare state and driving millions into unemployment and poverty. In the Third World the situation is a hundred times worse.

But emboldened by the collapse of the socialist bloc and the alleged failure of Marxism, opportunists in the Philippines are challenging all the fundamental principles of Marxism. They reject the leading role of the working class in the revolutionary movement, the necessity for a vanguard party and the dictatorship of the proletariat and they reject the need for a planned economy.

Seeking support from socialists in Europe, these social democrats issued a Statement on 24 April claiming that 'the NDF was undergoing its

most serious crisis' and confronts the prospect of 'a split'. The Statement notes that according to Byron Bocar, a supporter of the social democratic NDF-Europe:

'the roots of the crisis had to do with differences of views within the organisation on a wide range of fundamental questions such as revolutionary strategy, the vision of an alternative society, the "vanguard role" of the CPP and the nature and role of the NDF.'

Thus it:

'was important to reaffirm the NDF's programme and principles due to the attacks of the "Stalinist group" lead by CPP Chairman Armando Liwanag against the NDF's principle of democratic pluralism, its economic programme and its organisational integrity.'

THE COMMUNIST MOVEMENT IN THE PHILIPPINES

The role and record of the CPP throws clear light on the character of the struggle taking place in the Philippines revolutionary movement. The CPP was re-established as a revolutionary organisation in 1968 based on Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought. In 1972, Jose Maria Sison, the CPP's leading theoretician, summarised its strategy:

'We are... engaged in a continuous Philippine Revolution with two distinct stages: the national-democratic and socialist stages. In both stages, the class leadership is held by the proletariat which is historically most progressive, as a political and economic factor, and which evokes the most advanced ideology. Through its vanguard detachment, the Communist Party of the Philippines, the proletariat sees to it that the national-democratic revolution is carried out and completed; that the socialist revolution immediately ensues upon the victory of the national-democratic revolution; and that for a whole historical epoch socialism creates the foundation for communism.'

At the present stage of the Philippine Revolution, the Party wields two weapons against the enemy. These are armed struggle and the national united front.'

(Philippine Society and Revolution p181)

To wage the armed struggle the CPP established the New People's Army (NPA) on 29 March 1969. The NPA



developed into a powerful guerrilla force and by 1985 was operating in 60 of the country's 73 provinces. It established numerous liberated areas and acts as a political organiser of the poor peasantry. To unite a majority of peasants and urban petit-bourgeoisie into an anti-imperialist bloc, the CPP



formed the National Democratic Front in April 1973. Today the NDF unites the CPP and NPA with more than 20 mass organisations representing workers, peasants, the petit-bourgeoisie, national minorities, women, Christians, artists, scientists and other forces. The leadership of this front is the working class, because:

'no revolutionary united front is possible in the Philippines without working class leadership and the basic worker-peasant alliance.'

(International Liberation – IL, Vol 5, No 2, March-April 1993)

Guided by this strategy, the CPP/NDF/NPA alliance succeeded in galvanising popular resistance to the Marcos dictatorship (1965-1986) and



emerged as the undisputed vanguard of the Filipino revolution. But by the mid-1980s and especially during the Aquino regime (1986-1992) the movement was forced into retreat. In 1992 the CPP Central Committee met to prepare a:

'rectification movement in view of the grave ideological, political and organisational errors which have caused serious setbacks to the Party and the revolutionary movement.'

(IL Vol 4, No 6, November-December 1992)

One of the most damaging mistakes was 'left-opportunist militarism and insurrectionism'. Calculating on a rapid military victory the CPP leadership, in the early 1980s, prematurely initiated the stage of 'Strategic Counter-Offensive'. It formed dozens of full-time battalions in its rural strongholds seriously reducing cadre engaged in political and organisational work. This military apparatus was unsustainable and suffered heavy blows after Corazon Aquino's assumption of power when over 30 additional army battalions were deployed against the NPA.

Political and organisational work was also neglected in urban areas. The popular movement was urged to

launch 'one mass action after another without any political consolidation'. In the absence of political education new recruits became vulnerable to confusion by petit-bourgeois forces.

Even more damaging to the movement was the 'anti-infiltration hysteria', particularly in Mindanao, an NPA stronghold, in 1985-1986, and Tagalog in 1988. As a result of the intense military pressure on the NPA, a campaign by the CPP leadership to root out Deep Penetration Agents went out of control and led to 'criminal' bloodletting. Conducted without 'due process' it:

'resulted in the prejudgement, torture and murder of more than 950 DPA suspects including Party comrades, Red Fighters, mass activists and other people.'

(IL Vol 4, No 6, November-December 1992)

As a result Armando Liwanag states that the movement was:

'confronted with an unprecedented loss of mass base... [and that] the very life of the Party is now threatened'.

(International Viewpoint No 241, 21 December 1992)

By the end of 1986, Party membership in Mindanao had dropped from 9,000 to 3,000, its mass base had shrunk by 50% and 15 companies and 30 platoons fell to 2 and 17 respectively. Overall the movement has suffered a 40% decline in 'organised forces', which today remain significantly below the 1985 figures. In addition, the NPA has seen a 40% reduction in territory under its control.

THE RECTIFICATION CAMPAIGN

The first step of the rectification campaign was to correct the movement's militaristic mistakes. The Party had abandoned the Strategic Counter-Offensive in 1990 and now began restoring priority to mass political work, political organisation and political education. Many NPA formations previously doing only military work have been disbanded as the NPA returns to the classical revolutionary guerrilla warfare which combines both military and political work in a prolonged people's war.

In relation to the 'anti-infiltration hysteria' strict guidelines now exist to safeguard the rights of those accused of treason or other serious charges. Falsely convicted activists have been rehabilitated, their families compensated and many CPP cadre criticised and punished. At least two leading cadres in Mindanao have been executed and one expelled from the CPP.

During the rectification campaign, the CPP has demonstrated its understanding of the essence of imperialism and world politics. It recognises the fundamental division of the world between reactionary and milit-

aristic imperialism and the oppressed:

'now that they (the major imperialist nations) are confronted with the problem of a prolonged world recession and are afflicted with internal contradictions among themselves, they seek to devise more cruel and more deceptive ways of exploiting the peoples of the Third World and the capitalist countries.'

(IL Vol 4, No 4, September-October 1992)

Furthermore the Gulf War:

'exposed... the persistence of the violent and aggressive nature of imperialism which comes to the fore whenever necessary.' (ibid)

In this context of intensifying economic crisis and imperialist reaction:

'The illusion of democratisation and peace under the aegis of imperialism and with the drumbeating by the pro-imperialist petit-bourgeoisie is already giving way to more repressive regimes and further on to popular resistance.' (ibid)

IMPERIALISM AND CAPITALISM IN THE PHILIPPINES

Capitalist development in the Philippines can never provide for the basic needs of its population. Today, class exploitation and polarisation is acute and growing more so. 80 per cent of the population – ie 47 million people – barely survive below the poverty line. A year ago, the figure was 70 per cent. 50 per cent of the entire labour force is either unemployed or underemployed. 45 per cent of businesses pay below the legislated minimum wage and more than 52 per cent systematically violate legal labour standards. In the rural areas, where 75 per cent of the population lives, 80 per cent of the population remains landless. On average a peasant family works 0.5 to 1.5 hectares while an economically viable farm is put at between three and five hectares. Neither bourgeois military dictatorship under Marcos nor bourgeois democracy under Aquino's 1986 'democratic revolution' has done anything to alter these appalling statistics of exploitation and oppression. Indeed the conditions of the vast majority continue to deteriorate.

Despite formal democratic elections, the imperialists and their local allies impose a ruthless bourgeois dictatorship against the popular movement. Indeed the main role of the Filipino ruling class is to secure the resources and wealth of the country for imperialism. The 1993 Philippine budget, for example, allocates \$5.1bn – that is 40 per cent! – for servicing the country's \$30bn foreign debt.

To suppress popular resistance, the second largest portion of budget expenditure – \$840m – is allocated to the armed forces, the national police and paramilitary forces. Since the 'Aquino revolution', these forces are engaged in 'total war' against the popular movement. Their methods range from systematic massacres, death squad murder of communists, trade unionist and other activists, disappearances, aerial bombardment and forced relocation of entire villages which have created over 2 million internal refugees. Despite rising to power on the back of a popular insurrection and despite her 'democratic' claims, Aquino could only resort to violence and dictatorship to defend the interests of multinational and local capitalists.

If the Aquino 'democratic revolution' demonstrates anything, it is that the Filipino ruling class and bourgeois democracy cannot play a progressive role. In this light, the standpoint of the social democrats reveals its real dangers for the working class movement.

THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC STANDPOINT

The social democratic factions reject... continued on page 12



Kurdistan: Revolution at a critical juncture

Events during the past year: Syria's closure of Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) bases in Lebanon, the joint Kurdish Democratic Party – Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (KDP-PUK) and Turkish army assaults on the PKK in South Kurdistan (northern Iraq), the PKK's unilateral ceasefire and resumption of hostilities in the face of Turkish state intransigence have brought the Kurdish revolution to a critical stage. **TREVOR RAYNE** reports.

Financial Times: Abdullah Ocalan has agreed to extend his ceasefire. Are you closer to a solution?

Suleyman Demirel: We never hear him, whatever he says. If you start hearing him, then he becomes a party to the problem... We should never deal with him. (*Financial Times* 7 May 1993)

On 17 March 1993 PKK General Secretary Abdullah Ocalan accompanied by Jalal Talabani, leader of the PUK from South Kurdistan declared a unilateral ceasefire in the Kurdish liberation struggle to run over the 21 March Newroz (New Year). The ceasefire was extended indefinitely on 16

April when Ocalan made the following demands: an end to the annihilation of Kurdish people and Turkey's military operations; a general amnesty; cultural rights such as Kurdish language radio and television stations, newspapers and books; the right to the unfettered use of the Kurdish language and the legalisation of Kurdish political organisations; the right for displaced persons to return to their homes and be compensated for damage to their houses and loss of livestock; abolition of the system of regional governors and the disarming of the village guards. Ocalan warned that if the Turkish Republic continued its operations then the ceasefire

would be meaningless and the guerrilla war would have to be resumed. He appealed to the UN and to the European Parliament to send delegates to Kurdistan to observe the ceasefire.

In an immediate response to the original ceasefire declaration Turkey's Interior Minister ruled out negotiations with the PKK. The army-dominated National Security Council recommended continuing with the big Spring military operations. During the Newroz celebrations the Turkish army killed 41 people, 30 of whom were guerrillas observing the ceasefire. By 24 May, 128 Kurds had been killed since the unilateral ceasefire began, six Kurdish villages had been destroyed and some 2,000 Kurdish civilians were arrested and detained without trial. Turkish sources claimed that 74 PKK guerrillas had been killed including 13 guerrillas murdered with chemical weapons at Silvan.

On 24 May 41 Turkish troops were killed by PKK guerrillas at Bingol, in what they described as 'self-defence'. By 8 June when Ocalan announced the unilateral ceasefire over, 44 Kurdish villages had been destroyed since 17 March, 3,500 Kurdish civilians had been arrested and several hundred people had been killed by the Turkish state forces. President Demirel had offered the PKK an 'honourable surrender' with limited amnesty provisions if combatants gave up their weapons, a fate which Ocalan described as 'worse than suicide'. Rejecting the appeal from the PKK to find a political solution to the Kurdish problem the Turkish state showed its determination to crush the liberation struggle militarily. The UN and European Parliament barely acknowledged the ceasefire and the



PKK guerrillas training in the Zile camp in South Kurdistan

In April 1993 the Turkish Human Rights Association stated that over the previous fifteen months 400 Kurdish settlements had been burned down, 1.5 million Kurds had been forced to move to western Turkey, that there were hundreds of unsolved street killings including 40 Kurdish activists from legal political parties, 5 human rights workers and 13 journalists. During that same fifteen months the cities of Sirnak, Kulp, Varto, Cizre and Nusaybin have been subject to intense bombardment by Turkey's armed forces.

could have a political presence in South Kurdistan but could not use this as a base from which to attack Turkish state forces.

Barzani and Talabani and the Iraqi Kurdish bourgeoisie and feudal leaderships are dependent on Turkey, the US and NATO to preserve their autonomous enclave. Turkey provides the six-monthly renewable mandate for the NATO war planes which patrol the skies of northern Iraq. With the Baghdad embargo of the Kurdish region the enclave is dependent on the UN and routes through Turkey for supplies and currency. Barzani and Talabani have thus far shown that they are willing to sacrifice the PKK and Kurds in Turkey to retain their own positions. The Turkish state does not want an independent Kurdish state in South Kurdistan, but its priority is defeating the PKK and for that reason it is prepared to use Barzani and Talabani as allies.

In May the UN began withdrawing its armed guards from northern Iraq claiming that it was short of funds. Throughout the spring there were meetings between the diplomatic representatives of Turkey, Syria and Iran. They appear to have been coordinating attacks on the Kurds. Each state fears the impact that the PKK is having and the implications of an independent South Kurdistan. In April Iranian government forces began bombarding and shelling camps of the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran along Iran's border with northern Iraq and adjacent to South Kurdistan. Iranian troop incursions into South Kurdistan followed. Turkey and Syria have agreed to find a 'final solution' to their dispute over the River Euphrates and control over its waters by the end of this year. Additionally with the Soviet Union gone Syria is showing itself more accommodating to the US over Israel and has been willing to close down PKK bases in the Lebanon to win US favour. Syria wants the Golan Heights back and for that it needs US pressure on Israel.

Any rapprochement between Syria, Turkey, Iran or Iraq is viewed with apprehension by Barzani and Talabani. Precisely at the moment when an independent Kurdish entity begins to emerge they transform from being useful tools for the colonial powers to use in their contentions into a potential challenge to that colonialism and status quo. Barzani and Talabani recognise that Turkey has only a conditional need of them and that fulfilment of this need is critical to retaining US and EC protection for

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Turkish state felt reassured that it could continue its war unperturbed by international 'concern'.

Ocalan announced the ceasefire over at Bar Elias on 8 June. He said that 'thousands, tens of thousands, will suffer... this campaign will be the most ferocious of all our campaigns. We are for a union within the federal rule in Turkey. On that basis we are always ready for a political solution. Until this happens the armed struggle will be escalated...'. He warned that Turkey's economy and tourist income would be targeted and blamed Turkish state colonialism which 'bears the responsibility because they have not recognised the minimum of our rights. If they do not recognise the minimum of our rights how can we halt the armed struggle?'

South Kurdistan – uncertainty and hedging

At the beginning of October 1992 the new Kurdish Parliament in South Kurdistan voted for the status of an independent federated state. On 4 October the two leading figures in this parliament – Barzani, leader of the KDP, and Talabani mobilised 15,000 peshmergas to drive the PKK out of their bases on the border with Turkey. By 28 October the commander of Turkey's army General Dogan Gures said that up to 200,000 Turkish troops were in northern Iraq. Together with the KDP and PUK peshmerga they were pitted against the PKK.

Although the PKK claim to have lost no more than 100 guerrillas the combined assault drove them from their bases and rendered a section of their command and logistics inoperable. The KDP and PUK said that the PKK

target of the fundamentalist attack was a 78-year-old Aziz Nasin, a prominent socialist intellectual, author of humorous novels and founder of the left wing daily *Aydinlik* which published extracts from Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*.

One would have thought that Rushdie, himself a target of fundamentalist murder, would declare solidarity for Turkey's fundamentalist victims. Precisely the opposite: 'these self-proclaimed Turkish secularists and anti-fundamentalists were using my work as 'propaganda weapons', 'in exactly the same unscrupulous fashion' as the fundamentalists. 'Once again,' Rushdie added, 'I was a pawn in somebody else's game.' Even worse: 'I cannot avoid the conclusion that he and his associates did what they did, under the cover of free-speech rhetoric, precisely to provoke the violent confrontation that has now resulted.' Here are the warped thoughts of an egomaniac who passes himself off as an intellectual. ■

when hundreds of people were killed.

The democratic and socialist movement has responded to this dangerous manifestation of fundamentalism with 100,000 strong protest demonstrations in Ankara and Istanbul and tens of thousands in other cities. In Istanbul, police opened fire wounding three people participating in the march.

A Turkish correspondent

FTPL adds

Salman Rushdie's role in this affair is worth a comment for it reveals the spineless, cowardly and disgusting character of an intelligentsia nurtured in the corrupt and sleazy atmosphere of imperialist Britain. One

Fundamentalists massacre socialists and democrats

On 2 July a reactionary horde of fundamentalists in the central Turkish town of Sivas attacked and burnt down a hotel accommodating democratic and socialist intellectuals and artists attending a conference. Thirty seven of them were burned to death.

The fundamentalist crowd was egged on by a provocative speech from the city councillor and aided by the passivity of the police. Turkey's new Prime Minister legitimised the murders claiming that the fundamentalists had been incited by a left wing intellectual's attack on Islam. This orchestrated attack on progressive forces in Turkey demonstrates how civilised and modern the Turkish bourgeoisie is!

The 2 July massacre was an extension of a process begun long ago in 1980. The Turkish ruling class has systematically nurtured fundamentalism as a counter to socialist ideology and the revolutionary movement. The Sivas massacre is not new. Similar ones were organised against the left in Corum and Maras

6 The US and EC governments have been pouring weapons into Turkey which will be used to try to destroy the Kurdish struggle. 9

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their enclave. If they are able to subdue the PKK not only militarily in northern Iraq, but more importantly, politically in its aspirations and methods throughout Kurdistan, they will have earned their keep.

Over the past few years Barzani and Talabani have visited Ankara. Part of the Turkish government's strategy has been to use them to found a Kurdish party to rival the PKK in Turkey. The PKK has attempted to bring other Kurdish political trends in Turkey under its political influence. After the 17 March ceasefire declaration, Ocalan for the PKK and Kemal Burkey, leader of the Kurdistan Socialist Party, signed a protocol ending animosity between the two parties. Representatives from other Kurdish political parties were present at the

ceasefire declaration. Between 18-20 June representatives of eleven Kurdish political organisations including the PKK met and agreed to start preparations for a National Front. These parties include representatives of more bourgeois and petit-bourgeois currents in Kurdish society. Their incorporation into the liberation movement is positive in so far as it diminishes the ability of the Turkish state to create a Kurdish entity to rival the PKK, but potentially negative in that bourgeois and petit-bourgeois influences may compete with the socialist forces to determine the political line of the liberation movement and the PKK. This would manifest itself over the methods of revolutionary struggle and the objective of independence, with the bourgeoisie and petit-bourgeoisie making concessions to

colonialism and imperialism.

Ocalan himself has stated that he does not want 'separatism', but for relations with Turkey to be 'reorganised on a free and equal basis'; 'to be in a state of unity is not contrary to independence'. He does not take the Iraqi Kurdistan development as a model, criticising the endeavour towards federation in Iraq as unrealistic unless put on a basis of democracy and equality with Arab and other people in Iraq. 'What is important here is the Kurdish people being able to guarantee their political and military existence, having the power to do that.' This formulation may appear to be a concession towards autonomy and away from an independent Kurdistan. However, self-determination as a democratic principle is not identical with complete separation. What matters is the role of the working class and peasantry for whom democratic rights and control of the land and means of production would invariably bring them into conflict with the bourgeois colonialist Turkish state. Federalism as Ocalan defines it above necessitates the democratisation of the Turkish state. The dominant elements in the Turkish state, led by the military, assess that the PKK has been strategically and significantly weakened by its expulsion from Lebanon and restriction of its activities in northern Iraq. In this context, an intensified military assault should, they gauge, diminish support for self-determination within Kurdish society as it is rendered unattainable and strengthen the trend towards compromise and ultimately surrender to Turkish state rule.



A Kurdish village destroyed by Turkish airstrikes

Hence the significance of Ocalan's 17 March ceasefire declaration in the presence of Talabani, a man whom on previous occasions he described along with Barzani as 'horse-traders... who have put our land up for sale'. The expulsion from Lebanon and the attack on its bases in Northern Iraq have increased the pressure from bourgeois elements among the Kurds on the PKK leadership. Barzani and Talabani are favoured by imperialism. The PKK is viewed as dangerous with its working class and poor peasant base of support. There were reports that the ceasefire was opposed by sections of the guerrillas in the mountains. The resumption and intensification of the guerrilla war indicates that the pressure of the mass movement has prevailed over the path towards concessions to colonialism and imperialism.

Unlike the PLO the PKK has no hinterland of bourgeois support to bank roll it and strengthen the position of those who would make concessions to colonialism. The US and

EC governments have been pouring weapons into Turkey which will be used to try to destroy the Kurdish struggle. Socialists in Europe must fight against the attempt to isolate the liberation movement and push it onto the path of concessions and subordination to colonialism and imperialism. This means supporting mobilisations such as those of Kurdish communities in 28 cities across Europe on 24 June where they demanded an end to European governments' support for the Turkish state's war effort. That way the attempt to isolate the PKK is fought and the powerful socialist and working class trends within it are strengthened. ■

■ After being given permission to take place, the first ever Gay Pride march in Turkey was brutally attacked by the police and all the marchers arrested. The organisers were detained and a number of foreign participants were deported after a failed attempt was made forcibly to test them for HIV.



Turkish soldiers rounding up Kurdish women for questioning

6 If the Aquino "democratic revolution" demonstrates anything, it is that the Filipino ruling class and bourgeois democracy cannot play a progressive role. 9

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the CPP's rectification campaign. Their solution to the problems of the revolution consists in seizing control of the NDF, overthrowing the CPP's revolutionary programme and using the NDF to advance their own narrow interests. Instead of a revolution led by the communist party to overthrow imperialism and capitalism, they propose a 'coalition government' based on 'democratic pluralism' in order to build a 'mixed economy with a socialist perspective'.

Their utopian outlook was exemplified in a speech on 24 April 1993 by Byron Bocar. Opposing the CPP's draft constitution for the NDF, he stated that:

'The NDF programme puts forward the vision of establishing a democratic coalition government with the participation of all democratic forces in the spirit of democratic pluralism, under which the rights of the people shall be promoted, expanded, guaranteed.'

(20 Years of the NDF)

In the Philippines itself, 19 NDF Council members issued a Declaration which attacked the CPP's draft constitution on the grounds that:

'Instead of the NDF's principle of democratic pluralism, they would return to a one-party dominated state.'

(Declaration, 23/4/93)

These formulations do not even begin to realistically deal with the question of government, democracy and political power in the context of the class

struggle and the dictatorship of imperialism and its allies. Democracy and pluralism are not abstract, universal and classless categories. The CPP rightly dismisses as 'bourgeois' all talk of 'democracy' and 'pluralism' that does not explicitly oppose the 'preservation of the political rights of the exploiting classes.'

Given the brutal, repressive and militarist character of imperialism and the Filipino ruling class, socialism cannot be built without a revolution which suppresses the 'rights of the exploiting classes'. The 'counter-revolutionary power' of the old ruling classes 'must be isolated and destroyed', otherwise they will resort to unprecedented violence and brutality to restore capitalist and imperialist oppression and exploitation.

In opposition to 'democratic pluralism', the CPP leadership counterposes the more precise idea of a 'people's democratic government' led by the worker-peasant alliance which suppresses capitalism and the old ruling class and sets about constructing socialism.

The reactionary standpoint of the Byron Bocar group is clearest in its position on the economy. The 24 April NDF-Europe Statement declares:

'that the NDF-Europe rejected both the capitalist path of economic development and a centralised, state-monopolised economy similar to those of the fallen Eastern European regimes. Such a centralised economy actually undermines socialist construction whilst a mixed economy encourages the sus-



tainable development of the forces of production.'

(Statement 24/4/93)

The Declaration by the 19 NDF Council members makes a similar point:

'Instead of the NDF's programme for a mixed economy with a socialist perspective, they would return to a Stalinist centralised, state-monopolised economy, a model that has proven unsustainable.'

Such distortions rely on European ignorance of the CPP's harsh critique of the Eastern European model. But whilst criticising this model, the CPP recognises that a planned economy is the foundation for a society free of ex-

ploitation and oppression. Experience in the ex-socialist bloc demonstrated that despite its flaws, the centrally planned economies eliminated hunger and unemployment and provided a free welfare service for the majority. Such a situation has never existed even in the most glorified of mixed-economies in the most developed European capitalist nations.

Theoretically the notion of a mixed economy is thoroughly untenable. It is not possible to combine two contradictory economic systems: a capitalist, market, economy producing for profit and a socialist economy producing the people's needs. The search after such an economy can only lead to compromises with capitalism and imperialism, a compromise from which only a minority of the petit-bourgeoisie will benefit. The mixed economy is in fact a capitalist economy with large crumbs for a minority of the petit-bourgeoisie.

But social democracy's harshest 'criticism' is reserved for the vanguard role of the communists. To secure the transformation of the NDF into a vehicle for petit-bourgeois ambitions, the opportunists must first eliminate the CPP's leadership of and influence over the NDF. NDF-Europe sets about this task in its attack on the draft NDF constitution. Directly challenging the CPP's leading role they write:

'We believe that the leadership of the CPP in the NDF must be earned in the course of the struggle for national liberation and could not be demanded as a privilege or institutionalised.'

(20 Years of the NDF)

This is brazen even when read in Britain where there is a great deal of ignorance about the CPP and the NDF. The CPP has earned its leading role 20 times over! It built the NDF and sacrificed thousands of martyrs in more than 20 years of struggle. To give some theoretical gloss to their position they add:

'We believe the leadership of the revolution and the working class need not be tied to one specific party. We therefore support efforts to develop better forms of shared leadership.' (ibid)

What parties are to 'share' this leadership, their class character and programme is not mentioned. But what is clear is that they don't want the CPP's revolutionary anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist programme to guide the NDF.

Confronted with such reactionary trends at the very moment the world is engulfed in crisis, poverty, starvation, war, racism and environmental degradation the CPP recognises that:

'The great theoretical challenge for proletarian revolutionaries: [is] how to prevent the undermining and betrayal of socialism and how to continue the socialist revolution.'

(IL Vol 4, No 5, September-October 1992)

Concretely in the Philippines this means a struggle to:

'defeat the scheme of certain anti-communists and anti-proletarian elements to liquidate the vanguard role of the working class, erase from history the role of the CPP in building the NDF, discredit the CPP as an unwelcome "authoritarian", superimpose on it the "democratic majority" will of petty bourgeois groups and individuals and recycle the old democratic revolution on behalf of the big bourgeoisie and landlord class.'

(IL Vol 5, No 2, March-April 1993)

We communists in Britain can only wish them success and make sure their message reaches readers who may have been confused by the documents circulated by the social democrats of NDF-Europe.

* International Liberation is the English language journal of the NDF. Excerpts are from various authors all sharing the same standpoint.

INSIDE NEWS

Prison Watch

Prison Watch, the Leicestershire-based information and campaigning group, has recently been highlighting the number of deaths in Leicester prison: four in six months, the highest current rate in a British prison. Despite the findings of three inquests, that there were clear advance warnings that Warren Jones, Barry Samuels and Paul Akers were depressed and intending suicide, prison officials failed to take basic precautions and the Governor still maintains that he and his staff are taking all possible steps to stop these deaths.

Two of the four deaths occurred in the Rule 43 Segregation wing B1, the position of which, as well as lacking light and space, almost guarantees violence and abuse from other prisoners. Prisoners had warned that moving Rule 43 prisoners to B1 would lead to suicides. The Governor's response was to instruct that all Rule 43 prisoners be placed in shared cells, a policy that places many prisoners under yet greater stress.

Prison Watch is demanding an independent public inquiry into conditions and practices at Leicester prison, including the publication of the secret Home Office inquiries into the deaths. To help this campaign, Prison Watch wants to hear from prisoners and relatives of prisoners at Leicester prison.

Prison Watch can be contacted on this or any other matter concerning gaols in the Leicestershire area via: Tim Taggett, 30 Twickenham Road, Leicester. 0533 781262; Pete Moore, 24 Rochester Close, Derby. 0332 756158 - Answerphone/Fax. David Howarth

Prisoners' Justice Day - 10 August

Following the first British commemoration last year of Prisoners' Justice Day, observed in Canada and in the US, Anarchist Black Cross will be holding pickets of Pentonville and Armley prisons from 4.30-6pm and Winson Green from 1.30-3pm.

POWs' birthdays

Stephen Nordone 758663
HMP Frankland, Finchale
Avenue, Brasside, Durham
DH1 5YD 2 August
Paul Kavanagh L31888
HMP Full Sutton, York YO4 1PS
12 August
Vincent Donnelly 274064
HMP Whitemoor, Longhill Road,
March, Cambs PE15 0PR
25 September

Belmarsh - 'Country club' nobody wants to join

On 28 June the Chief Inspector of Prisons' report on Belmarsh was published. *The Guardian* carried an article entitled 'Rising violence [alleged attacks on staff by prisoners] mars "country club" image of showpiece prison.' PATRICK HAYES, who is on remand in the Category A Unit at Belmarsh, awaiting trial on political charges, gives his view of the prison:



After a few days in the high security suite at Paddington Green with its oppressively dirty cells, no natural light but 24-hour illumination and no-one to talk to (or at any rate that I wanted to talk to!) it was a relief to arrive at Belmarsh. However, even during the initial 'honeymoon' period in the Category A high security unit, I never saw the prison in the rosy light apparent to *The Guardian* reporter who imagined Belmarsh to be comparable to a 'country club with bars'. I am not too familiar with country clubs but this is one I would be reluctant to join. If, as described by Deputy Governor Lightfoot, Belmarsh is '... a lovely prison', why has there been one suicide and one attempted suicide in the Cat A unit in the past few months?

The Category A unit is effectively a prison within a prison. The cell blocks hold a maximum of 12 prisoners on each of four spurs, arranged on two floors. The unit is surrounded by a mesh fence topped with razor wire which is itself surrounded by a high wall. All this is within the confines of the main gaol itself. Exercise is con-

ducted in a caged, roofed asphalt yard with no more than 12 people being allowed 'out' at any one time.

Prisoners are constantly monitored by closed circuit video cameras and, at least two screws at all times. Not content with this level of control, every prisoner is allocated to a control 'book', in which every movement in or out of the spur is recorded. Category A prisoners are regarded as 'on the book' and this book accompanies them at all times. The movements are also recorded centrally on a movement board. Additionally, the spurs are constantly observed by a screw whose function is to observe interactions between prisoners, activities of prisoners and make contemporaneous notes of this in a diary. All conversations, either with or overheard by screws may be written up to prisoners' records.

A typical day begins at 8am when the cells are unlocked for breakfast and association until noon when we are locked into our cells with lunch. At 1.35pm we are unlocked for association until 5pm when we are locked into our cells with supper until the

next morning. Twice a week we have evening association from 6 to 8pm. Whichever way you look at this it is far short of the 10 hours out of cell claimed in *The Guardian* or the 12-hour target set by the Home Office.

Very few facilities are available to us. The one-hour exercise period is spent walking the perimeter of the small exercise yard. For the rest of the day, the only facilities are a TV on each spur and a pool table. No education facilities are provided, no work is available to those who would do it. No inter-spur association is permitted. The small gym, which accommodates only nine at a time, is unused 22½ hours per day.

Visits are accommodated in a portacabin, seemingly the designers 'forgot' prisoners would wish to see their family and friends. All visitors have to be approved by the police and Home Office before they can visit. This process takes around two months for London addresses, longer for provincial addresses. For Irish political prisoners, the process is elongated to accommodate a 'harassment' factor. Visits are conducted in individual rooms, 8' by 14', with a screw present to observe and listen to the visit. Prisoners are strip-searched before and after each visit; visitors are subject to a 'rub-down' search as well as a metal detector.

In short, the regime in the Category A unit is overwhelmingly oppressive, with little attempt being made to alleviate the boredom felt by the prisoners. Far from the main problem being lack of in-cell television as suggested in *The Guardian* it is the inhuman conditions epitomised by degrading practices, poor facilities and a refusal to recognise the prisoners as human individuals.

Mkaritch Martirosian, aged 25, committed suicide in the Cat A unit on 7 June. Ugar Salih, who was in the next cell, told *FRFI*: 'I cut him down and tried to resuscitate him. I didn't get any thanks and the next day I was fined £6 for refusing to be strip-searched before a visit. The main staff preoccupation was the inconvenience and the amount of paperwork it caused.'

A diary of injustice

8 June: After the announcement by the foreman of the jury which convicted the Bridgewater 4 that he is now convinced of their innocence, relatives and supporters hand in a dossier of new evidence to new Home Secretary, Michael Howard, asking him to immediately re-open the case.

11 June: Michelle and Lisa Taylor, wrongly convicted of the murder of Alison Shaughnessy, walk free from the Court of Appeal, after their lawyers prove the police withheld vital evidence and the press sensationalised and inaccurately reported their trial. Wearing 'Winston Silcott - Hostage' T-shirts, they pledge their support for Winston and many other innocent prisoners.

16 June: Michael Chamberlain, lifelong friend of now dead West Midlands Detective John Perkins, states Perkins openly admitted using violence against Pat Molloy to obtain a false statement, implicating Molloy and the three other members of the Bridgewater 4.

21 June: Ivan Fergus, wrongly convicted of stabbing a bank-clerk is cleared at the Court of Appeal. The Appeal judges openly accept he was 'entirely innocent'. His original defence was conducted by Toppin and Co, now closed by the Solicitors' Complaints Bureau 'to protect the interests of clients'. Another Toppin and Co client, Trevor Henry, is still in gaol and his appeal against a 10-year sentence for conspiracy to cause GBH will be held in September.

The appeal of the M25 Three opens.

24 June: In response to a question from Jeremy Corbyn on when the Home Office will announce its decision on the Bridgewater evidence, the Minister praises the governor of Gartree prison for his 'sensitive' handling of Jim Robinson's rooftop protest!

25 June: The Appeal Court reserves judgement on the M25 Three.

5 July: The 'East Ham 2' cases are referred back to the Court of Appeal by the Home Secretary.

6 July: The Royal Commission publishes its report.

7 July: Three High Court judges rule that Kenneth Clarke, 'erred in law' when he refused to grant Derek Bentley a posthumous pardon last October.

Chas Newkey-Burden

Support FRFI from the inside!

The RCG supports political prisoners in Britain's gaols, highlights the fight for justice of framed prisoners and gives solidarity to prisoners, gaolled for whatever reason, who fight back against the oppression and brutality of the prison system.

We offer this solidarity in a number of ways: coverage on the Prisoners' Fightback page, writing letters of support and protest, supplying our newspaper free of charge to those inside, sending books and other literature.

Inspired by prisoners' study groups in the US and occupied Ireland, we are offering the following suggestions as to how you, the prisoners can support the work of the RCG.

1. Share your *FRFI* or any other literature we send you with other prisoners. Make sure as many people get to read it as possible. Then...
2. Start a discussion group. Discuss *FRFI* and our books with others. Let us know about your discussions. What do you and your comrades like and dislike about our paper? We can suggest other books for you to read. And you can suggest some to us!
3. Contact people on the outside. Ask your friends or family to subscribe to *FRFI* and find out what they think about it. If they like the paper, ask them to

contact us and become involved with our political work.

4. Keep in touch. Write regularly. Let us know if you are moved. What is the new gaol like? Do prisoners there know about *FRFI*?
5. Try to get Larkin Publications into the prison library. Some will and some won't but there is no reason not to try. If in doubt, ask us to send a catalogue to the library or the education department.
6. Send us a donation! If you are one of the lucky ones, not totally reliant on the pittance of prison income, why not make a donation to cover the cost of your own subscription (£6.50 per prisoner) and/or that of others. This will mean we have more money available for those who cannot afford their own subscription.
7. Be a reporter. This is extremely important. Most of the 'Prisoners' Fightback' page is written by prisoners. Report on incidents, conditions, improvements, deteriorations, battles won or lost.
8. Fight censorship. If you or others are prevented from receiving *FRFI* or any other political material, complain about it, go through the procedures, demand an explanation from the governor. If you do not get satisfaction, you can even take legal action.

Shott to pieces



Like Belmarsh, Shotts prison in Scotland has been lauded as a 'showpiece'; yet since it opened in 1987 it has been the scene of constant protest by prisoners at a regime which is sterile, boring, mindless and punitive. A toilet in a cell and a colour television do not bring contentment when you are serving a long sentence, your family is far away and they are harassed by intrusive searches when they arrive to visit.

On 8 July over 100 Shotts prisoners took over D Hall and held it for 23 hours. During the protest D Hall was wrecked and slogans such as 'No more strip searches of our families -

they are not criminals' were daubed on the walls.

Due to the mutual solidarity of the prisoners protesting, the authorities have been unable to identify the 'ringleaders'. However, as usual, including non-participants, are being punished. 80 'rioters' have been transferred out to other gaols and all those who remain are confined to their cells.

FRFI is keen to extend its contacts in Shotts and in Scottish prisons as a whole. Write to us with your news, views and information.

Nicki Jameson

Killing me softly – the US blockade of Cuba

People on the left have a dangerous habit of spoofing the forces of US imperialism as a clumsy, violent giant that cannot get anything right. This view makes it easy to see the collapse of the Soviet Union entirely in terms of inefficiency, bureaucracy and internal contradictions – and to believe that it won't be too much of a surprise when Cuba goes down the plug-hole too. Doubtless internal forces were at work in the 'socialist states' and are at work in Cuba now. But history shows that from 1917 on western capitalism slumbered neither day nor night in trying to destroy communism. The 'collapse' that we thoughtlessly heralded in 1989 was the fruit of 72 years of sustained effort and devious practice on the part of the US, the UK and others. After initially trying direct military force (the 1918-1921 Intervention), the imperialists soon moved to more sophisticated means.

There are important parallels in the Cuban situation. In 1961, the US tried the direct approach, which had worked in Mexico, Nicaragua etc. When that so ignominiously failed, they turned to various forms of economic embargo.

The Monroe Doctrine effectively provides the US with a framework for intervention in the affairs of all Latin American states. With respect to Cuba, this was exacerbated by the Platt Amendment which, among other things, gives the US the right to maintain a naval base on Cuban soil!

After the 1961 Bay of Pigs Fizzle the US managed to gain some international sympathy for an economic embargo. (Britain, Canada and West

Germany refused to participate). Kennedy ordered physical interference with vessels entering Cuban waters. When such overt piracy could not be sustained and UN regulations rendered it illegal – even in wartime – for the blockade to interfere with medical or educational supplies, the Johnson administration invoked the 1908 'Trading with the Enemy' Act. This Act forbids US commercial enterprises from making money by trading with countries engaged in war with the US. By invoking the 'aid and comfort to the enemy' clause, it was possible to prevent even medical, educational and food trade with Cuba. To get Cuba defined as an 'enemy' in the classical sense, various obscure articles of the Monroe Doctrine were invoked, and approved by many of the (leant-on) member states of the OAU. Reagan intensified the implementation of

this Act – I was even prevented from publishing a book about Cuba's education system because I had directed that all royalties from it be given to the Cuban Ministry of Education!

Bush materially worsened conditions in Cuba in 1992 by the introduction of the so-called Cuban Democracy Bill (the Torricelli Act), which renders third country subsidiary trading with Cuba illegal. 70 per cent of such trade is presently in medicines and food. Bush stated clearly in April 1992 that the purpose of the embargo and the Bill were to disrupt domestic life in Cuba and to compel them to govern themselves in a way more amenable to American values.

People had great hopes for a Clinton victory as far as US relations with Cuba were concerned. God knows why – perhaps they don't know American history too well. For Clinton receives his advice on Cuba largely

from the right-wing Cuban exile group CANF (whose chairman led the Bay of Pigs invasion) and has been an enthusiastic supporter of the Torricelli Act. Under him, the blockade has intensified.

So what must we do? I think that we must actively become engaged on three fronts:

- talk about the blockade to fellow workers, family etc. The issue is at best obscured and at worst misrepresented/ignored by the servile British media. Don't regard informal talk as a 'bourgeois affectation' – it can be a revolutionary tool.
- organise much more coherently to get medical supplies to Cuba. If you fly Cubana Airlines to Cuba, any excess baggage consisting of medical supplies for Cuba will not be charged. Make that widely known to any group which regularly has people going to and from Cuba.
- engage in overt symbolic activities – picketing the US Embassy, marches, street theatre etc. Symbolism, like talk, is vital.

Having not long ago returned from leading a two-week tour to Cuba of British health workers, I can say that we cannot be complacent. The blockade is biting deep. It is crippling Cuba. It is creating unrest. It is a most flagrant act of aggression against a small, third world country that has the temerity to run its own affairs in a way not approved of by US interests. Do we stand with David or Goliath? There can be no neutrality.

Theodore H. MacDonald



REVIEWS

Cuba's fight against AIDS

■ **Aids in Cuba: A Portrait of Prevention** by John Waller et al, Cuba Solidarity Campaign, June 1993, £1.50.

Cuba has the same population as New York City. New York has 42,737 reported cases of AIDS. Cuba has 159.

New York's centre for disease control has no official figures for AIDS deaths, but says that two thirds of reported cases of AIDS – ie at least 28,000 people – can be assumed to have died. In Cuba, where records are kept, the figure is 84.

In New York, five to ten times the number of known AIDS cases are estimated to be carrying the virus. In Cuba after massive routine (non-mandatory) testing, fewer than 900 have tested positive.

You might think that for Cuba this is a story of successful prevention. However, Cuba's policy of housing people with HIV in sanatoria has been heavily criticised internationally. Cuba's AIDS prevention programme has become one more item in an ongoing campaign of disinformation about the reality of life on the island.

The five authors of this pamphlet, four of whom visited Cuba and its sanatoria, attempt to provide the information to accurately portray the policies and programme that Cuba has adopted to prevent the spread of HIV.

No country can claim to have found the ideal approach for dealing with HIV and AIDS. In Africa patients diagnosed HIV+ or with AIDS are immediately discharged with little or no health care provision. In the USA, if you cannot afford treatment or insurance you don't get it. In Britain the Home Office has admitted that segregating prisoners with HIV has led to discrimination from staff and other prisoners. The recent findings that AZT is ineffective in delaying the onset of AIDS, and the British govern-



Havana's Los Cocos Sanatorium

ment's announcement of cuts in government funding to voluntary organisations involved in AIDS programmes, could in effect see the rate of HIV infection once more rise and spread out of control.

As far back as 1983, while many governments refused to admit to an AIDS problem, Cuba established the National Commission for the Control of AIDS and drew up a programme for all hospitals. Decisive action prevented the spread of the HIV virus. In 1986 the first sanatorium was opened. There are now eleven around the country to allow residents to be near family and friends. The Western media portrays these sanatoria as concentration camps with guards posted at every corner. The authors' eyewitness report instead shows them to be pleasant, open campuses with swimming pools and extensive grounds. Residents live in their own units in conditions that are often better than those on the outside, continue to receive their previous salary or an allowance, and receive social and psychological assistance to cope with their condition.

It cannot be denied that Cubans who test HIV positive have no option but to go to a sanatorium, but in the

light of criticism, this policy is becoming more relaxed. Doctors insist on an initial six-month assessment period after which patients are free to return to the community. In all countries doctors play a role in restricting individual liberty. In Britain, for example, people are sectioned under the Mental Health Act. The Cuban Ministry of Health argues that you cannot look at the sanatorium policy only from the perspective of the individual without taking into account the interests of a Third World society in protecting itself from a potentially disastrous epidemic. The authors argue that the great majority of Cubans would probably agree. There is an ongoing debate inside Cuba about its AIDS programme. The debate is open to people from outside Cuba to make constructive comments and criticisms. But one thing is sure: if the US blockade gets its way there will be far less treatment for people with AIDS – no condoms for safer sex and no outstanding health service for the entire Cuban people. It is up to socialists everywhere to stop that happening.

Terry Dowding

The RCG collects medical aid, including condoms, for Cuba. For more information tel: 071 837 1688.

The revolutionary legacy of the Kenyan Mau Mau

■ **Mau Mau: A revolution betrayed** by Maina wa Kinyatti, Mau Mau Research Centre 1991, 60pp, £4.50. Available from Larkin Publications or Vita Books.

Mau Mau: a revolution betrayed by Maina wa Kinyatti is a sharp indictment of Kenya's capitalist ruling class and its academic lackeys. In a study of their hostility to the legacy of the Mau Mau, Maina wa Kinyatti demonstrates the extent to which they have abandoned the anti-imperialism and social egalitarianism of the Mau Mau. He also explains why the Kenyan ruling class represses those attempting to revive memories of the Mau Mau with the same ferocity the British used against the liberation movement.



A round-up of Mau Mau

The Mau Mau, symbolised by Dedan Kimathi, represented the popular, revolutionary wing of the Kenyan anti-colonial movement. Through the Mau Mau and its armed struggle 'the workers and peasants became an independent and leading political force.' (p17). The foundation for its programme was the land question: the demand that all the land stolen by the colonialists be returned to the people. Through their mass

support, in Nairobi and in the country, they built a remarkable network of military and political organisations. After long years of armed struggle, the revolution was only defeated by the deployment of overwhelming military power. Conservative estimates put the number of Kenyan dead at 150,000 with 250,000 maimed for life and 400,000 left homeless.

A central feature of the Mau Mau standpoint, one which expressed its popular character, was its uncompromising opposition to the emerging Kenyan petit-bourgeoisie and bourgeoisie who collaborated with imperialism in its war against the Kenyan people. Represented by Jomo Kenyatta, this stratum was prepared to compromise with colonialism in return for privileges for itself. Groomed by the British imperialists it took over when Kenya became independent. Its hatred for the Mau Mau legacy is not surprising.

Since independence this class has enriched itself in collaboration with the imperialists and at the expense of the workers and peasants. The Mau Mau legacy of consistent anti-imperialism, social egalitarianism and opposition to all neo-colonial collaborators is naturally odious to those who have made fortunes for themselves whilst the slum population multiplies. Thus the attempt to expunge this legacy and depict the Mau Mau in the same colours as did British racist propaganda: 'savages', 'Gikuyu chauvinists', 'tribalists' etc. Thus the persistent repression against those seeking to revive the Mau Mau legacy, a legacy that in the name of the working class and peasantry, represents a challenge to Kenya's corrupt comprador ruling class and to imperialism. Maina wa Kinyatti was himself imprisoned for writing an honest history of the Mau Mau.

Eddie Abrahams

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and

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perspectives for defeat?

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will be discussing

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in decline?

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South London Readers & Supporters Group meet

fortnightly. The next meeting after this will be Tuesday 24 August.

Tel: 071 837 1688 for details

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On the question of escapes

In a postcard to FRFI, John Bowden, who escaped from prison last year, asked us to explain why a paragraph and part of a sentence were removed from his article on privatisation published in the last issue of FRFI. The paragraph read: 'On the question of escapes, the position of revolutionary socialists, especially, should be clear and straightforward; we support unreservedly the act of escaping from capitalist prisons - we support any action on the part of prisoners that challenges the control and containment function of prisons.' The part-sentence removed referred to 'the right and duty of prisoners to attempt escape'. Because we have no means of contacting John, he asked us to print the reply in FRFI.

Dear John

Thank you for the postcard. We removed the paragraph you refer to because, as communists, our

position on prison escapes is not the one you state. We had no possibility of discussing this with you - and we think that your position may be the same as ours if such a discussion took place. Since the paragraph and reference were not central to the main argument in your article, we decided to remove them pending such a discussion. Firstly we do support actions by prisoners which challenge the conditions under which they are held. These, as you well know, are often brutal, and especially so in local prisons where 'short-term' prisoners can be held for years in overcrowded cells, 23 hours a day, with no facilities for education and recreation, and no private toilet and washing facilities. While many a judge will tell you that the punitive aspect of any sentence is the deprivation of liberty not the living conditions, in reality conditions in British prisons are barbaric and are clearly intended to punish. The entire criminal justice system has a class purpose and its objects are in the main working class people, many of whom are in prison because they are poor and oppressed. Political action by these prisoners is essential if any challenge is to be made to the British state.

The spate of appeal court successes in relation to 'miscarriages of justice' is

brutally exercised on 20 May when the security forces attacked a war veterans' demonstration, killing three. *Nobody's Back Yard* also carries articles praising Clinton as more progressive on human rights than Bush - the same Clinton who, like his predecessor, deports Haitian refugees back into the clutches of the military thugs who run the country, and who supported the Torricelli Bill against Cuba well before Bush... The British left's enthusiasm for Clinton was disgustingly exhibited.

The second dayschool had speakers from El Salvador, Nicaragua, Brazil and Colombia, and the First Secretary from the Cuban Embassy in London. All the speakers stressed the importance of the Sao Paulo forum as leading the unity of progressive forces in Latin America. In fact, there seems to have been a marked political retreat by many of these forces, many of whom now embrace the merits of market forces and reject the concept of a vanguard party - although the Cubans, by their example, act as a significant counterweight within the forum to such views. It is too early, however, to assess the full value of the forum.

What was clear from these two meetings is that the main forces of the Central American revolution, under enormous pressure from US imperialism, appear to be in political retreat, but sections of them are resisting this, with the tiny example of Cuba to encourage them. As ever, the task of progressive forces worldwide is to unite around the demands: US hands off Cuba! US out of Central America and the Caribbean! MIKE WEBBER Aylesbury

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LETTERS Write to FRFI BCM Box 5909, London, WC1N 3XX

indicative of the effect that prisoners can have in leading campaigns, in collaboration with relatives and supporters outside, to establish innocence. It is only the tip of the iceberg, we all know that; but the stand taken by these prisoners has proved an inspiration to many others. The Strangeways prisoners played a similar role when they rose up against conditions in the prison. As a regular contributor to the prison page, you know that we believe that prison conditions are not 'welfare' issues but part and parcel of our political standpoint and that we expect prisoners themselves to play the leading role in that struggle.

However, we do not 'unreservedly support the act of escaping from capitalist prisons' nor do we believe prisoners have a 'right or duty' to do so. While its quite clear that most prisoners have every right to want to escape given the conditions they are held under, to argue they have a duty to do so, and that this applies to every prisoner, is another matter. We must follow the argument through.

Working class people, the poor and oppressed are not only the main victims of British law and the criminal justice system and also the bulk of the prison population, they are also the vast majority of the victims of crime. This applies not only to property

crime, but also to crimes of violence. And it is the most oppressed - women, children, old people, black people - who suffer the most. In your argument, do we believe that racists who attack or murder black people have a right and duty to escape? And do we support them if they do? Should rapists escape with our support? Is it in the interests of the working class that murderers like Nilsen and Sutcliffe should be free? We don't think so.

That is not to say that we believe that the capitalist prison system is acceptable for these prisoners. We do not. Prisoners convicted of sexual crimes, for instance, are themselves frequently victimised. In some of Britain's prisons they suffer what are among the most appalling conditions and are in the main offered no help or rehabilitation. We support them in any struggle to improve prison conditions and facilities. The vast majority of prisoners do not fit this category of course. Many should not be in prison at all. Many are brutalised by the prison experience. Escape can be an individual solution - and we would not blame prisoners for taking that opportunity. Nonetheless, the future has to lie in the political organisation of prisoners to oppose the conditions of their incarceration.

Free the Toxteth Two!

We are protesting our innocence and would appreciate any assistance in highlighting our struggle to overturn another miscarriage of justice. We are both doing life with a judge's recommendation of 15 years in my case. We are refusing parole because we wish to leave as innocent men with no strings attached. We were convicted in 1981 at Liverpool Crown Court of the robbery of a betting shop and the murder of the manager.

There are many reasons why our conviction is unsafe: no identification of us by the main witnesses who picked out several other people; no forensic evidence; we made admissions because we were bullied, coerced and intimidated; we were denied access to a solicitor during our detention in the police station; statements made by other remand prisoners incriminating us were false and written by other people; documentary evidence was withheld; witnesses at the trial were intimidated; an alibi witness was not thoroughly investigated.

On behalf of

J. KAMARA

HMP Wakefield, 5 Love Lane,

Wakefield WF2 3AG and myself,

RD GILBERT

HMP Garth, Ulmes Walton Lane,

Leyland PR5 3NG

Conspiracy laws - no justice

Three years ago the convictions of the Winchester 3 were quashed. Martina Shanahan, Finbar Cullen and John McCann were victims of the conspiracy laws used to convict Irish people of political offences. They were convicted of conspiracies to murder despite there being no deaths, no weapons, no evidence of contact with weapons, and no suggestion of any other methods of killing. They were convicted because they were Irish, in the wrong place, at the wrong time, and sentenced to 25 years imprisonment. The media convicted them on the day of their arrest, and only public campaigning in several countries convinced the British legal authorities to reconsider this legal abuse.

Those of us who worked with the Winchester Three remain concerned at the use of conspiracy legislation and its extension. These types of laws have been used primarily to gain maximum sentence for minimum evidence against those who may have a political difference with the state: the Shrewsbury pickets, the Bradford 12 (Asian youths defending their community), and Irish defendants on political charges. In South Africa we see parallels with the 'common purpose' laws used against the Sharpeville Six and the Uppington 26.

I want to raise three cases briefly.

In March, Paul Magee and Michael O'Brien were convicted at the Old Bailey. Michael O'Brien was convicted of the attempted murder of two police officers and possession of guns. The prosecution did not assert that there was any evidence that Michael touched a gun. They certainly did not claim that he fired one. They asserted that he was part of a 'joint venture'; that although he was the driver, he gave 'assistance and encouragement' to the man who did fire a Kalashnikov rifle at a police car containing two police officers. Michael O'Brien's defence contended that 'the

evidence is no more than' that the shots were 'intended to disable the car'.

Michael O'Brien is now serving an 18 year sentence. His last letter was from Full Sutton Prison, Moor Lane, York YO4 1PS.

Further evidence of the inequity of 'common purpose' and 'joint venture' prosecutions came not long after, when we all saw on television the 'heli-telly' used to convict Pat Kane, by 'common purpose', of the Casement Park murders. He had never been accused of shooting the soldiers, but of being part of the crowd involved in their deaths. In fact the video upheld his story as to his actions that day, and he was clearly not involved in murder.

Two other people convicted by the media were Nessan Quinlivan and Pearse McAuley. 'Three held for Gow murder', 'IRA cell trapped by police' were typical headlines. They were never charged with the murder of Ian Gow, of course - they were charged with conspiracies to

murder. They did not ever have a chance of a fair trial in England, and, with their escape from Brixton prison and the publicity around their recapture, no one can pretend they could have anything resembling a fair trial here.

The Quinlivan family are already campaigning against the extradition of these two men to Britain. They believe they should be tried in Ireland, and there is legislation under which this could be done. The family would appreciate all messages of support. Nessan is currently in Portlaoise Prison, Co Laois.

While conspiracy laws are used as they are against particular groups of people, notably Irish people; while 'joint venture' and 'common purpose' prosecutions make it easier to convict and pass long sentences for little or no evidence of involvement, we have to go on fighting. While these laws exist and allow these abuses of the human right to freedom, there is no justice. WENDY PEARMAN South London

Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism! £2,000 publications drive

The two *Counterattack* titles published by FRFI over the last year are an important contribution to the defence and development of socialist ideas in Britain. *The Legacy of the Bolshevik Revolution* continues FRFI's resolute defence of the political heritage of Marxism-Leninism; *Labour: a Party fit for Imperialism* tells the true story of a rotten, pro-imperialist party which has consistently sabotaged the struggles of the working class. Both books are political weapons in the hands of the working class against imperialism and opportunism, and for socialism.

We will be bringing out the next title, on Imperialism and the Middle East, in September, and a book on South Africa soon afterwards. But to produce this important material costs money! We urgently need to raise £2,000 to cover our production costs. We are therefore asking you to donate as generously as you can to our Publication Fund.

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CARE IN THE COMMUNITY

Making the poor pay

It was Margaret Thatcher who said 'there is no such thing as society'. No society equals no community, but in the now time-honoured Tory tradition of 'make the poor pay for their poverty', non-existent society/community has now been officially handed the task of caring for its very real elderly, sick, physically and mentally disabled and mentally ill.

The majority of care is already provided in the home, mainly by women. There are an estimated six million unpaid carers in Britain of whom only a small minority receive the Invalid Care Allowance of £33.70 a week, although a survey has shown that nearly a quarter spend over £36 a week on the costs of caring.

The main purpose of 'Care in the Community' is not to provide a more stable, less institutionalised environment for those who need supervision or assistance; it is to save government money by devolving the responsibility of caring onto local councils and ultimately onto already overstretched relatives, in cases where such people exist. Where they do not, provision of help will depend on the resources of the local authority. Each authority is in charge of assessing the needs of people in its area, a job previously done by the DSS. If residential care is necessary, the local authority will recommend a particular home and although it is possible to choose a different home, it may not cost more than the one recommended, unless you or your relatives are able to pay the difference. This ruling has been successfully challenged in court in one case but is still being applied in general.

Several recent killings and arson attacks by schizophrenics who had been released from long-stay mental institutions have brought 'community care' into the news but have mainly served to cloud the debate with a backlash from the 'lock 'em up and throw away the key' brigade.

Since April, when the Community Care Act came into force, there has been chaos. In some areas as many as half the residential homes for the elderly are set to close; large numbers of would-be residents have not yet been assessed and many NHS patients complain that their local authority has pressurised them into going into private homes.

Any genuine attempt to care for those who need to be looked after, within the community rather than in institutions, would be more expensive than a policy of containment, not less so. It is nonsense to talk about 'community care' without a vastly increased provision of dignified, self-contained, supervised housing, not today's 'unofficial asylums', large, unpleasant hostels for homeless men and women.

Under these so-called reforms, the old, the ill and the mentally unstable will be left largely to their own devices. A few will bid for attention

in dramatic ways and be confined in return to prison or long stay high security 'hospitals'. The majority will suffer silently, in their homes or on the streets.

The attack on single parents

In the latest wave of moral indignity, thinly disguising the desire to save money, single parents, overwhelmingly women, are the main target. Not content with already having taken a massive swipe at the same group by introducing the Child Support Act (see FRFI 112) and ignoring the fact that two-thirds of 'single' parents are divorced, separated or widowed, the rhetoric is all about the 'unmarried mothers', teenagers in particular, who apparently get pregnant as a deliberate short-cut to a life of leisure. The grim reality is these 'scroungers' live on bread-line Income Support and are frequently forced, not into the luxurious flats and houses the moralists would have us believe, but into squalid, cramped bed-and-breakfast accommodation.

So what to do with these lax breeders? Short of forcible sterilisation of the working class (reversible in times of boom and labour shortage) the 'answer' proposed by the right-wing of the Tory Party, Lilley, Redwood,

Gummer et al, and echoed in more 'caring' tones by the Labour Party is simple: lock 'em up. Yes, back to the 'institutions for fallen women', where, 'Supervision would mean the mother could not have a string of boyfriends and would be given guidance on how to bring up a child.' (Dr David Green, Institute of Economic Affairs)

Peter Lilley, Secretary for Social Security, is thought to be seriously considering such proposals for hostels for young single mothers, who would be forced to provide a court order to prove they have been thrown out of their parents' home and whose parents would be compelled to contribute towards their cost of living.

There are now 1.3 million lone parent families in the UK. It is undoubtedly true that the 'traditional family' is breaking down. And what is the main cause of the disintegration? Feminism? Atheism? No, poverty.

So, yet again, the government hits hardest those least able to hit back. 'Suffer the little children...' (and their mothers).

Nicki Jameson

BURNSALL STRIKE

Union reveals its true nature

On 30 June Birmingham General, Municipal and Boilermakers' Union (GMB) unilaterally declared the strike at Burnsall's metal-finishing factory over. Nineteen workers, mainly black women, had been on strike for just over a year, for trade union recognition, equal pay for women, an end to compulsory overtime and basic health and safety.

A striker explained how officials, Joe Quigley and Danny Parry behaved:

'They said that if we criticised them, talked to the press about it, or attended the 3 July demonstration, they would drop our industrial tribunal cases... they said if we went to the picket line or the demonstration then we would be arrested by the police and the union would not help us.'

The GMB issued a press statement to cover its back. In it the union explains it was opposed to mass picketing at Burnsall's because it would 'focus the media's attention on the inevitable violent confrontations'.

The betrayal did not come out of the blue. Officials had been suggesting the strike be called off since January and publicly attacking the Support Groups, accusing them of misappropriating funds and deliberately provoking arrests.

The Anniversary Picket - 15 June

Immediately after the main speech by a woman striker, the GMB opposed the choice of interpreter. Despite a unanimous vote by the 200 people present in favour of Kamaljit, the GMB insisted he had 'consistently misinterpreted' and they wouldn't

allow him to speak. The result was that although everyone on the picket heard the voice of the GMB, all non-Punjabi speakers were deprived of hearing the direct voice of the strikers.

At 6.30pm the scab workers left the building under police escort. The picket followed them down the road where the front clashed with police and there were three arrests.

The 70 remaining strikers and supporters agreed to march to the police station; all the trade union banners and officials had disappeared. The police were determined to prevent the march and dispersed it by splitting it until it was too fragmented to proceed.

The GMB ensured it was absent when the police moved in. This involved leaving as the scabs came out and therefore taking no part in the true business of the picket. It also allowed them to denounce those arrested as trouble-makers.

3 July - march through Birmingham cancelled

The planned march did not go ahead. The police and local council were obviously aware of the union's decision and between them banned large sections of the route and refused permission for the assembly and rally

points. An indoor rally took place instead.

The GMB and its friends

The GMB never wanted this strike to win. A strike led by Asian women against sweatshop conditions throws up too many questions about racism and sexism in the labour movement. The GMB is not interested in the most oppressed sections of workers. At the moment the union's chief concern is preserving its link with the Labour Party. A party which itself has done nothing to support the Burnsall strikers. Clare Short MP, whose constituency backs on to Burnsall's, sent a solidarity message to the 3 July rally; it was read out with derision: during over a year of the strike she did not visit the picket line once.

Cloud-cuckoo land

Despite the obvious reality that the union was lukewarm about the strike from day one, sections of the left found this so unpalatable, they chose to openly pretend it was not so. In *Socialist Worker* on 12 June, Paul Foot wrote about an SWP fringe meeting at the GMB conference, addressed by Joe Quigley, who 'has taken this strike very seriously and wants to win it'. This is the man who had been trying to persuade the



strikers to call it a day for the previous six months! Foot expressed a common delusion of British socialists: that the way forward lies with the left wing of the labour aristocracy. To add insult to injury, when the GMB scabbed on the strike, *Socialist Worker* carried a tiny article in its industrial diary, saying 'support was never mobilised by the union officials'.

A new movement is needed

It is no use leaving the leadership of a movement in hands of those who will betray it. A new movement is needed, uniting all those whose interest lies in fighting the racist, anti-working class British state, not in capitulating to it.

The Support Groups and other supporters have pledged to try and raise the strike money previously paid by the GMB. A majority of the strikers are keen to continue. As striker Surrender Kaur Basi told *FRFI* at the

anniversary: 'It doesn't matter if it takes us another year. We will continue until we win.'

Drop the charges now!

13 strikers and supporters still face prosecution following arrests on the picket. The Birmingham Support Group will be picketing the cases. For details phone 021 551 4679.

Nicki Jameson

Weekly Support Group Meetings

Birmingham - Monday, 7pm - 146 Soho Road, Handsworth.
London - Wednesday, 6.30pm - Londec, Instrument House, Kings Cross Road, WC1.
Manchester - Tuesday, 7pm - Longsight Library, Stockport Road. There will be a public meeting at the Manchester address on Tuesday 3 August.